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LITERATURE AND THE WAR

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Many people, as the price of sugar indicates, assume that the second World War is going to duplicate the first. Probably this is a fallacy, for it daily becomes clearer that 1939 is not 1914. And yet, even if events follow a different pattern, we can learn something, especially in the field of culture, from a study of what happened twenty-five years ago.

The United States entered the war too late, and played too restricted a part in it, for our literature to have felt the full effect. The works of Dos Passos, Hemingway, and Faulkner are enough to prove that the war experience has colored our whole literary life, but there was not time enough for us to go through all the phases. In England, however, the war did everything that a war could do to a nation's culture. It killed a number of talented writers and heaven knows how many more whose talent had not been proved. It created some reputations and destroyed others. It subtly affected every author, and it affected many in the most obvious ways. It played a larger part in the literature of the first decade of peace than in the literature of the war years, and its influence was stronger in the second peace decade than in the first.

The declaration of war found England with a goodly number of writers of international reputation, men who had been born fifty or sixty years earlier. On them the impact of war was immediate.

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None could ignore the war, but a few managed to stand relatively aloof, among them Thomas Hardy. Despite his lifelong opposition to war, Hardy did not doubt the justice of England's cause. He wrote a few poems in criticism of Germany, and he took some slight part in war activities. But chiefly his poetry dwelt on the pathos of war and on the war's confirmation of his view of the universe. "I might say," he commented in a typical passage in his journal, "that the Good-God theory having, after some thousands of years of trial, produced the present infamous and disgraceful state of Europe—that most Christian Continent!—a theory of a Goodless-and-Badless God (as in *The Dynasts*) might perhaps be given a trial with advantage." After a correspondent had described to him the destructiveness of modern warfare, he wrote, "If it be all true that the letter prophesies, I do not think a world in which such fiendishness is possible to be worth saving. Better let Western 'civilization' perish, and the black and yellow races have a chance. However, as a meliorist (not a pessimist as they say) I think better of the world."

Not many authors could achieve this kind of impersonal aloofness. Joseph Conrad, however, was perhaps even more pessimistic than Hardy and had a far lower opinion of human nature. His Tory philosophy led him to give complete support to England's war aims, and he played his part in the government's program of propaganda by visiting various naval stations and ships and writing his impressions of them. In Poland at the time of the German ultimatum, he said, "If England comes into the war, then, no matter who may want to make peace at the end of six months at the cost of right and justice, England will keep on fighting for years if necessary." But if there was no doubt where he stood, the war had only the slightest effect upon his writing, and it is seldom mentioned in his correspondence, which is chiefly concerned in the war years with his books and his gout. After all, he had said that the sea was unchanging, and he could not assume that the war had changed it.

Bernard Shaw also did not catch the war fever, but he was deeply concerned with it, more concerned with it than with the war itself. He did not attempt to oppose the war, but he did maintain that it was the consequence of fifty years of folly—Britain's folly quite as much as Germany's—and he protested against the way in which

Englishmen were acquiring the vices they attributed to the Germans. His pamphlet, *Common Sense about the War*, disturbed the patriots, and only his position as licensed court jester saved him from serious retaliation. In the end he managed to give effective expression to his view of the war in the bitterest and one of the best of his plays, *Heartbreak House*. Pacifists and Socialists accused him of cowardice, but at least he could maintain that his voice had been consistently raised on the side of sanity.

Certainly, most of the voices were not on that side. Chief of the pro-war authors, of course, was Rudyard Kipling. The great bard of imperialism had been promising England a war, had sulked because his warnings went unheeded. The year 1914 saw him recognized as prophet. "The Hun is at the gate!" he cried. "What stands if Freedom fall? Who dies if England live?" In poem after poem he denounced the Germans, berated America for not entering the war, and urged his countrymen on to victory. He became almost as prolific as he had been in the first fabulous years of his career, producing poems, short stories, military histories, and propaganda pamphlets. For Kipling as a writer the war was not a disaster but a fulfilment. It was his war, and he made the most of it.

If few authors followed Kipling's extravagant example of vindictiveness and hysteria, he was closer to the norm than either Hardy or Shaw. Chesterton, Wells, Bennett, Gosse, Lucas, Masfield, Galsworthy, and many others plunged into war pamphleteering. Chesterton was almost as fanatical as Kipling, and Gosse was not far behind. Galsworthy and Bennett showed greater moderation, though the latter's *Liberty! A Statement of the British Case* helped to fasten the myth of exclusive German guilt on American, as well as on English, minds. Masfield also was restrained, but his *Gallipoli* was one of the books that helped to foster the romantic conception of the war. "All that they felt," he says of the troops, "was a gladness of exultation that their young courage was to be used. They went like kings in a pageant to the imminent death."

Wells was the most influential of the pamphleteers—and the best example of the curious disorganization a great crisis can bring about in the literary mind. For twenty years he had set himself up as a prophet of progress and an enemy of exploitation. He had said

enough to show that he had few illusions about the British governing class, and yet somehow he convinced himself that Germany was the last fortress of reaction and, once the kaiser had been crushed, progress would come everywhere. Immediately he wrote *The War That Will End War*, which he followed with annual or semi-annual discussions of the war's conduct and outcome. "The world disaster," he sheepishly but candidly explains in *Experiment in Autobiography*, "now that it had come, so overwhelmed my mind that I was obliged to thrust this false interpretation upon it, and assert, in spite of my deep and at first unformulated misgivings, that here and now, the new world order was in conflict with the old." One of the strange manifestations of this mental upset was the attempt to revive religion. "I do not know," says the Wells of 1934, "how far I was being perfectly straightforward in this phase, how far I was—as the vulgar have it—coddling myself, and how far I was trying to make my New Republicanism acceptable in a different guise to that multitude which could not, it seemed, dispense with kingship."

Yet it was this very confusion that gave Wells a special distinction: he was the only well-established author to write a best-selling novel on the war during the war years. By 1916 when *Mr. Brilling Sees It Through* was published, the war was old enough so that simple atrocity stories or moral tales of our heroic boys could not sustain a weary population. Wells covered the whole conflict with a blanket of morality and hopefulness. Always skilful, and shrewd in his understanding of the middle class, he offered a recognizable picture of the war at home, and at the same time with just the right touch of sentimental, undogmatic religion he gave people the courage they needed. Wells rationalized the war for the average Englishman—and for the average American, already strongly pro-Ally, as well. Often the victim of self-deception, Wells probably never deceived himself so completely as when he wrote *Mr. Brilling*. On the other hand, of his many books with a purpose, none achieved its end so successfully.

By the time *Mr. Brilling* had appeared, other authors were trying to portray the effect of the war in England—Bennett and Galsworthy and May Sinclair, for example, in novels and stories, and

Barrie in one-act plays. *Saint's Progress*, which Galsworthy published just after the war, was surely one of his poorest novels, but such tales as "The Grey Angel," "Defeat," "The Juryman," "Peace Meeting," and "The Recruit" were sensitive as well as fair minded. Bennett's *The Roll-Call* was almost as weak as *Saint's Progress*, but it contained some sound scenes, and *The Pink Lady* was much more substantial. From Hugh Walpole, serving with the Red Cross in Russia, came a story of the war in that country, *The Dark Forest*, full of a promise he was later to belie.

By and large the older authors created the literature of the first part of the war, for the men who were fighting were, for obvious reasons, slow to find expression. Even early in the war, however, the poets began to be heard from, since a sonnet can be written in the trenches though a novel cannot. First to become famous was Rupert Brooke, whose Elizabethan eloquence matched the uncritical idealism of the first months. The romance of war was still shiny when "The Soldier" and "The Dead" appeared.

In time there were other war poets, who wrote of what they had seen in the trenches, not merely of what they had felt at the call to war. Wilfred Owen was probably the most talented of these, but Robert Graves's sardonic, matter-of-fact humor and Siegfried Sassoon's bitterness made a deeper impression. Edmund Blunden, Robert Nichols, and Richard Aldington published verses and then volumes. Many of the war lyrics were sensitive, honest, and fine, but none was first rate. Yet this was, by any critical standards, the only body of war literature created in England during the war.

Of the novels published between 1914 and 1918 the best had nothing to do with the war. The most important novel of 1915 was Somerset Maugham's *Of Human Bondage*, and one of the more distinguished was Ford Madox Ford's *The Good Soldier*. Both books were written before the war, and the only effect of the war on them was to postpone the recognition of their merits. Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* appeared in 1916, when its author was living in neutral Switzerland. Norman Douglas' *South Wind* was published in 1917, and Lytton Strachey's *Eminent Victorians* in 1918. The war years were not barren of literature, but it was not a literature of the war.

After the armistice the prose writers who had survived had their chance, but they were slow to take advantage of their opportunities. Perhaps the first book of importance was C. E. Montague's *Disenchantment*, published in 1922. Less widely read than the novel, *Rough Justice*, that appeared four years later, it did greater justice to the same theme. The first essay, called "The Vision," describes the mood of the soldiers at the beginning of the war: the satisfaction in following a simple routine, the confidence in England, the exaltation of a great task. "That," the essay ends, "was the paradise that the bottom fell out of." Of the next stage he writes: "From any English training-camp, about that time, you almost seemed to see a light steam rising, as it does from a damp horse. That was illusion beginning to evaporate." Essays on officers, chaplains, politicians, and propagandists describe the rest of the path to disenchantment. Finally he asks what can be done to prevent a repetition of this catastrophe. "There is only one thing for it," he says. "There must be still five or six million ex-soldiers. They are the most determined peace party that ever existed in Britain. Let them clap the only darbies they have—the Covenant of the League of Nations—onto the wrists of all future poets, romancers, and sages."

This was a note that was to be repeated again and again. In *The Spanish Farm* trilogy R. H. Mottram, a Quaker who served as an interpreter during the war, tried, as he said, "to set down what can be remembered before it is too dim." He pointed out:

In this way, before the generation of the War has passed, there may arise a true War Memorial—a record, at which gazing, our children may be able to imagine a way of settling disputes more intelligent than maintaining, during years, a population as large as that of London, on an area as large as that of Wales, for the sole purpose of wholesale slaughter by machinery.

There is not much fighting in the three novels, but there is a great deal of war, seen through the eyes of French peasants as well as those of British soldiers. Mottram shows something of the horror of war but much more of its complexity, boredom, and stupidity. Later writers were to convey more impressively the impact of war on the sensitive mind, but Mottram's account was not easily forgotten.

Mottram and Montague, uneasy as their consciences were, did not have to blame themselves for having contributed to the war insanity.

Ford Madox Ford, however, had written two pieces of propaganda, *When Blood Is Their Argument* and *Between St. Denis and St. George*. The latter is a specific reply to certain arguments against the war, the most common of Mr. Ford's answers being the simple expletive "Liar!" The former, widely circulated in the United States, advances the thesis that "the German nation has to all intents and purposes become, in these matters, a nation of madmen." The cause of the madness, according to Mr. Ford, was German education, soulless, mechanical, and state controlled. Ford went farther than most propagandists, for he blamed on Germany not only her own sins but also the sins of England—the decay of the gentleman, the rise of pecuniary standards, and commercialism in literature.

Mr. Ford made partial amends by omitting the books from his bibliography in *Who's Who*, and he also wrote the Tietjens tetralogy. In the Preface to *A Man Could Stand Up* he stated that his aim was to say:

This is what the late war was like: this is how modern fighting of the organized, scientific type affects the mind. If, for reasons of gain or, as is still more likely, out of dislike for collective types other than your own, you choose to permit your rulers to embark on another war, this—or something very accentuated along similar lines is what you will have to put up with.

There are some admirable descriptions of trench warfare, but Ford is chiefly concerned to show the effect of the war on his hero, and his strange Tory-Socialist Tietjens is an excellent subject for such a study.

Bernard Shaw had ventured to say that the war, though it might be necessary, had none of the heroic, idealistic qualities attributed to it by romantic poetry and popular propaganda. He went farther and said that the war was the outcome of the kind of life Englishmen—as well as Frenchmen and Germans—had been living. Montague, Mottram, and Ford all testified to the accuracy of his first charge, and no one could speak with more authority. They hinted at agreement with his second indictment, and Richard Aldington, in *Death of a Hero*, went even farther, slashing at the Victorians with their "Luv and God." Other of his novels and tales continued the revelation of the ugly monotony of war and the deadly hypocrisy that lay behind it.

More quietly Siegfried Sassoon told the same story, building to the amazing climax of his one-man strike against the war. He wrote at the end of *Sherston's Progress*:

I had no conviction about anything, except that the war was a dirty trick which had been played on me and my generation. . . . It seemed that I had learned but one thing from being a soldier—that if we continue to adopt war as a social institution we must also recognize that the Prussian system is the best, and Prussian militarism must be taught to children in school. They must be taught to offer their finest instincts for exploitation by the unpitiful machinery of scientific warfare. And they must not be allowed to ask why they are doing it.

So the record of disillusionment piled up, in Edmund Blunden's *Undertones of War*, in H. M. Tomlinson's *All Our Yesterdays*, in Robert Graves's *Good-bye to All That*. And during the twenties while these books were appearing, the authors who were having most influence in England were men who had played no part in the war and had written nothing about it. There was Joyce, for example. He had seen the war from Zurich and hated it. Who could tell how much of the bitterness against mankind that stirred on the pages of *Ulysses* was inspired by that hatred? The book did not have a word about the war, but the post-war generation rightly hailed it as a post-war book.

D. H. Lawrence had felt the war more immediately and perhaps hated it even more terribly. Twice called up for military service and twice rejected, he was dogged by detectives because his wife was a German and because his novels were thought to be immoral and somehow subversive. The description of the medical examination in *Kangaroo*—in a chapter called "Nightmare"—gives us some picture of what his own contact with the war had meant to Lawrence, and the account in *Aaron's Rod* of Captain Herbertson's obsession with slaughter is a remarkable anticipation of what British officers were later to reveal. In *Lady Chatterley's Lover* Clifford Chatterley is the personalization, the symbol, of war's destructiveness. To the end the war haunted Lawrence, playing a part in his tragedy that should not be ignored.

Like Joyce and Lawrence, Aldous Huxley was physically incapacitated for war service. At one time it would have seemed al-

most ridiculous to have suggested that the war was in any prominent way responsible for his peculiarly brittle, intellectual type of pessimism. Yet *Eyeless in Gaza* and *Ends and Means* have made us see that war is what Huxley has been concerned with all along. Hard as he has tried to assume the pose of an impersonal scientist studying the antics of a race of insects, he has finally abandoned the pretense and has made himself leader of a pacifist campaign.

It becomes clear that, whatever the direct effect of the war, its indirect effect has been immeasurable. We are accustomed to talking about post-war authors but perhaps with an inadequate realization of how precise the description is. Women writers have been affected quite as much as men: the war has been the focus of all the writings of Winifred Holtby, Phyllis Bentley, Vera Brittain, and Storm Jameson.

Observing all this, one wonders if history can possibly repeat itself. Here is a generation of writers the very core of whose thinking and feeling is disillusionment wrought by the last war. Doubtless many of them will support England in her present venture, but can there be another Kipling or, for that matter, another Wells? Will the propaganda bureau again find such willing and naïve servants?

Already it is clear that it is not only in respect to military matters that the tempo of this war differs from that of the last. August, 1914, gave us our first crop of patriotic poems and cultural-military manifestoes; September, 1939, has brought us nothing. Shaw and Wells are at their prophecies once more, but where are the other voices?

The war is young yet, and if it goes on long enough, some features of the old pattern will doubtless emerge. But not, I think, the whole pattern. There was a good deal of silence in the last war; there will be more in this. As for the young men who are fighting now and who, if they survive, will create the literature of the forties and fifties, what they will have to say is likely to depend not so much on the war as on the peace.

THE METAPHYSICAL TRADITION IN THREE MODERN POETS

ELISABETH TOMLINSON¹

To show "the very age and body of the time his form and pressure" is as much the privilege of the poet as of the player, and the difficult twentieth century has held an especial challenge for those poets who have attempted to interpret it. During the Victorian era, in spite of underlying skepticism there was a general atmosphere of security and a definite belief in what was traditional and conventional; social reform and industrial expansion imparted to men a sense of well-being and self-satisfaction. In 1914, however, with the outbreak of the war, the undercurrents of agnosticism and doubt swelled dangerously and threatened to inundate the generation that grew to maturity during the 1920's. Today we still feel the effects of the shattering of conventions and the breakdown of beliefs that accompanied the war. To us the present is confused and the future obscure. We question the value of what we have inherited and the desirability of what our own ingenuity has produced. Our educational system receives condemnation because it has failed to prepare men and women for the problems of everyday living; religious creeds have been shaken by science and corrupted by materialism; the schemes of politicians and diplomats arouse popular distrust; and utopian plans for remedying the waste of industrialism are viewed askance. Life has become so complicated in the past few decades that no one has been quite able to understand all that has happened or to figure out the relation of the individual to either the material or the spiritual world. The inevitable result has been an increasingly pervasive spirit of uncertainty, gloom, and frustration. After 1914 the solid optimism of Browning, the morality of Tennyson, and the artistic fabrications of Swinburne had little appeal. A new kind of thinking and a new way of writing were needed by the poet who would make his voice heard. As T. S. Eliot conceived of the new

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poet, he must be "... *difficult* ... more comprehensive, more allusive, more indirect, in order to force, to dislocate if necessary language into his meaning. ..."² Only in such a way could he express the complexity and variety of modern life. The poet's task was facilitated by the fact that he had a model to which he could turn in producing poetry new to the twentieth century. This model was the poetry of the seventeenth-century "metaphysical" writers, who were headed by John Donne, and among whom were included men like Vaughan, Herbert, Crashaw, Marvell, Carew, and Cleveland. These poets faced a situation in many ways comparable with the present. Past was the great Elizabethan age of conquest and discovery; political dissension was already brewing; the learning of the day was at the junction between medieval scholasticism and the new science; Pyrrhonism had found exponents in Montaigne and Bacon, and the materialistic philosophy of Hobbes was already in the making; religious unrest was everywhere apparent. The claims of tradition were lined up against the demands of science; and the intellectual leaders of the day, themselves somewhat confused, attempted to integrate the two. Like our modern poets, they needed a new way of thinking and writing, and like them they turned to a poetic form already existent and made it over. They took the Elizabethan conceit, then a bit outworn, and remodeled it into the "metaphysical" conceit or image,³ recognizing in it the natural qualities of succinctness, intellectual stimulation, emotional appeal, and pictorial suggestiveness, in which they wished to clothe their philosophy. This conceit, as T. S. Eliot observes,⁴ has been revived by present-day poets in their efforts to write as our age demands.

The poetry of the twentieth-century metaphysical writers has not been mere slavish copying from a model, because it bears the certain imprint of the time which has produced it. It is far less the result of conscious imitation than of response to intellectual, economic, and religious stimuli that induce metaphysical thinking in any period. However, a study of a few of the present-day poets

² *Homage to John Dryden* (London, 1927), p. 31.

³ For full discussion of the relation of the image to the Elizabethan conceit see Kathleen M. Lea, "Conceits," *Modern Language Review*, XX (1925), 389-406.

⁴ *Homage to John Dryden*, p. 31.

shows that to a great extent the problems which they have tried to solve and the uses to which they have put the metaphysical image are similar to those of the earlier school. I have therefore chosen to discuss the meaning and nature of metaphysical writing and to analyze in some detail the poetry of T. S. Eliot, Hart Crane, and John Crowe Ransom in order to show how the metaphysical tradition has been adapted to contemporary life.

I

The term "metaphysical" as applied to poetry means both a philosophy and a style of writing. George Williamson describes the philosophic aspect of metaphysical writing when he says that it "springs from the effort to resolve an emotional tension by means of intellectual equivalents which terminate in the senses. . . ." ^s It aims at fusion between the material world and the metaphysical world, the familiar objects of the former often serving as symbols for experiences in the latter. It arises most naturally when the material world itself is disturbed, and men, beginning to lose faith in the creeds and patterns by which life has been regulated, turn their thoughts inward and, through self-analysis, aim at a better understanding of themselves, their situation in this world, and their relation to a philosophic or idealized other world. Such psychological probing results in a highly intellectualized poetry, which requires a special kind of language—the metaphysical image. The image may best be described by calling it an attempt to find a point of continuity or similarity between two unlikes—a point that exists in the mind of the poet and that he must, by his intellectual powers, convey to the mind of the reader. The resultant comparisons are often unusual and the language obscure or strained. The metaphysical image becomes clear only after the reader has thoughtfully considered its implications.

The work of the seventeenth-century metaphysical school is too generally familiar to require lengthy explanation; but that there may be an immediate basis of comparison between the men I shall discuss and the earlier poets, I shall review briefly the characteristics

^s "Donne and the Poetry of Today," *A Garland for John Donne*, ed. Theodore Spencer (Cambridge, 1931), p. 158.

of seventeenth-century metaphysical poetry. The chief preoccupation of Donne in his secular poetry was love, and he dealt with it in both satirical and elegiac mood, physical love frequently becoming the symbol for spiritual love; in his religious poetry he wrote primarily of death and his relation to God. His poetry is characterized by a deep melancholy and disillusionment and is marked by its record of personal struggle. He draws his vocabulary as consistently from science, exploration, and travel as from the medieval learning of which he was master. Paradox and contradiction are of the essence of his expression, and his effects are, at will, pictorially beautiful or grotesque. The Cavalier poets who followed the precedent set by his secular poems were, on the whole, imitative, and Cleveland finally reduced metaphysical writing to mere dialectics. Of Donne's followers in religious poetry, Herbert concerned himself with his struggle between God and the world; Vaughan penetrated beyond the harmony of the soul with God alone and sought an interdependence in all life; Crashaw added a richness and ecstatic quality to metaphysical poetry that only Hart Crane among the poets to be discussed ever achieved. In summary the main interest of these men was the relation of themselves and others to the spiritual world; their images varied from organic poetic expression to hollow playing with words; and the mood of their poetry was essentially that of disillusionment and doubt, varied at times by touches of humor or outbursts of ecstatic hope and faith.

II

In the poetry of T. S. Eliot the theme of love is almost invariably combined with a sense of frustration and fear, the result of his revulsion against the sordidness in which post-war humanity was engulfed. Behind this is a conviction that, if men had not irretrievably betrayed their best capabilities, they might have achieved something infinitely beautiful that would have saved them. To illustrate his point of view he creates J. Alfred Prufrock, Apeneck Sweeney, Teresias, and Gerontion. Prufrock, who has spent his life in a drawing-room among women sipping tea and talking of Michelangelo, has responded with his senses to the suggestion of bare arms and faint perfume and has yearned toward gratification of his de-

sires. Afraid of actual physical consummation, which is a symbol of spiritual consummation, he deludes himself into believing that there will be time ahead—always time ahead. Meanwhile he grows old and stolidly accepts the conclusion that his capacity for love is dead, that the loss of what he has wanted no longer matters. The inane lady of "Portrait of a Lady" and the rather gross male visitor, to whom she makes feeble and foredoomed advances, are travesties upon men and women unable to grasp the meaning of life and unable to appreciate it. Gerontion, "dull head among windy spaces," has the memory of a vision of beauty, but it has become like a pungent sauce that can but "excite the membrane when the sense has cooled." All these derelicts are incorporated as the "hollow men," who believe for a moment that there is some salvation for them and then with ribald parody deny their own capacity for it. In *Apeneck Sweeney*, Eliot gives his most loathsome interpretation of the age. Spreading his knees and laughing, concentrating upon the drunken woman who "tears at grapes with murderous paws," Sweeney⁶ cannot hear the song of the nightingale near the convent of the Sacred Heart. All that is desirable is within his grasp, but he does not know there is anything outside the polluted air and filthy obscenity of a café. Again, epitome of vulgar sensuality, Sweeney⁷ arises with "gesture of orangutan" and sets about to shave, contemptuous of the woman he has left in bed, who, "withered root of knots of hair, slitted below and gashed with eyes," views him with hysterical loathing. Here the sexual appeasement desired by Prufrock becomes a thing of horror because of the coarseness and brutality of the two who have enjoyed it; so in terms of physical imagery Eliot denounces the degradation of his age. In "The Waste Land" he gives best expression to the theme of frustration through emotional impotency and spiritual barrenness. With Teresias as the integrating agent, he presents our world—a wasteland where all nature is devoid of fertility, mind and soul are dry dust, and water is the only hope of redemption. A girl indulges in nostalgic recollections of the past; Mme Sososttris, crass and fraudulent, tells human destiny in a pack of cards;

⁶"Sweeney among the Nightingales," *Collected Poems, 1909-1935* (New York, [1936]), pp. 65-66.

⁷"Sweeney Erect," *ibid.*, pp. 49-51.

a woman amid surroundings of luxury grows hysterical at the vacuity of her existence; two slum-dwellers render nauseous the subjects of love, birth, and marriage; a typist submits to an unwanted love-encounter with a "young man carbuncular" and wearily puts a record on the gramophone. When in the conclusion of the poem come the promise of rain and the warning of the thunder, Teresias dully wonders if he should set his lands in order and repeats scattered fragments of poetry he has stored up against his ruins. Eliot appears to hint at salvation through religious experience when he introduces Christ after his resurrection; certainly he is saying that only after a kind of atonement which will extinguish greed, hate, and lust will life return to the Waste Land.

The record of personal struggle is a persistent note in Eliot's poetry and with it the desire of some kind of mystical union with beauty. Repeatedly he uses the religious symbol in expressing himself. From "Ash Wednesday" emerges the soul of a dweller in the Waste Land—the poet himself, we feel—who believes that from the indigestible remains of a body upon which leopards have fed may be re-created life. When the lady who would save him withdraws, the whitening bones cry out for forgetfulness and peace. It is a poem of emotional discouragement and exhaustion; in it there is the suggestion that the vision of philosophic beauty can give but ephemeral satisfaction.

Eliot puts the metaphysical image to almost every conceivable use. Sometimes, like Cleveland, he is attracted by mere play with words, as in the following lines from "Ash Wednesday":

If the lost word is lost, if the spent word is spent
If the unheard, unspoken
Word is unspoken, unheard;
Still is the unspoken word, the Word unheard,
The Word without a word, the Word within
The world and for the world;
And the light shone in darkness and
Against the Word the unstilled world still whirled
Against the centre of the silent Word.⁸

Here are the characteristic paradox and involved sentence structure inseparable from the metaphysical tradition. Eliot is adept in using

⁸ *Poems*, p. 118.

the image to produce a pictorial, yet intellectualized effect. Prufrock, staggered for words to express his sensitive shrinking from reality, thus creates a picture of his mind and soul:

It is impossible to say just what I mean!
But as if a magic lantern threw the nerves in
patterns on a screen:
Would it have been worthwhile . . .⁹

In producing the grotesque, Eliot also employs the metaphysical image, as where he attempts to give Webster's conception of death:

Daffodil bulbs instead of balls
Started from the sockets of his eyes!
He knew that thought clings round dead limbs
Lightening its lusts and luxuries.¹⁰

Eliot is much given to irony and satire and again uses the metaphysical image, often prolonged into allegory, for emphasis. "The Hippopotamus"¹¹ is a satire against hypocrisy and pretense, symbolized by the "True Church." The way in which he makes the slimy, uncouth monster first an object of solicitude and finally a recipient of deserved bliss, while the church remains below "wrapped in the old miasmal mist," is a triumph of metaphysical expression. The frustration theme that forms the core of the poet's work could never have been fully expressed without the metaphysical image. In "Prufrock" occur the unforgettable lines:

When I am pinned and wriggling on the wall,
Then how should I begin
To spit out all the butt-ends of my days and ways?¹²

Even more striking is this passage from "The Hollow Men":

Is it like this
In death's other kingdom
Waking alone
At the hour when we are trembling with tenderness
Lips that would kiss
Form prayers to broken stone.¹³

III

All Hart Crane's maturer poetry is an expression of metaphysical philosophy, for its concentric force is an effort to find continuity

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 61.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 57-58.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 14.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 103.

between the chaos of the modern world and his mystical conception of order and beauty—the bridge of fire that links Atlantis with Cathay. Intimately aware of the material objects which make up the modern world, Crane sees in them the same sordidness and horror which Eliot finds. Like Eliot, he clings to a belief in beauty, which may be the means of salvation for his age; but, unlike Eliot, he identifies the very ugliness which revolts him with the means of salvation: *within* it he believes exists the power that will save humanity. In “White Buildings,” as Waldo Frank points out,¹⁴ Crane begins to find a means of expressing his nebulous concept in concrete terms, by his use of the sea, which, “great wink of eternity,”¹⁵ synthesizes life and death, time and space, knowledge and peace. In “The Bridge” he finds a better symbol for his belief in the essential unity of individual, objective world, and cosmos. The gross materialism of the machine age, the misery, the vice, the disillusionment, the greed, the lust, the folly of life as we live it, are portrayed without emasculation, but over all stretches the idealized Bridge, emblem of continuity and order. In attempting to render his vision comprehensible, he rises to heights of ecstasy above which neither Vaughan nor Crashaw soared.

The evidences of personal struggle are as strong in the poetry of Crane as in that of Eliot, and inseparable from them is the desire to end the torment of his personal life in some way that would represent a union with the mystic powers toward which he yearned. So in “Legend” he says:

It is to be learned
This cleaving and this burning,
But only by the one who
Spends out himself again.¹⁶

In explaining his relation to life, Crane is fond of the image based upon physical experience; and, like Donne's, his poems are best when the personal element is least obvious and the lovers come to symbolize some aspect of the poet's philosophy. In “The Harbor Dawn”¹⁷ the poet awakes by the side of his love, who is Powhatah's

¹⁴ *Collected Poems of Hart Crane*, ed. Waldo Frank (New York, [1933]), Introduction, p. xvi.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 102.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 61.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

daughter—America. For a moment she, whose flesh he loves, shares with him the passion and the vision that come when one first wakes to a day that has not yet become commonplace and sordid. They are a symbol of our own land as it might be if freed from the curse of materialism and greed.

Crane was especially sensitive to the forces operative in our age. To him the airplane and the dynamo offered the same challenge that the New World and the new science offered to Donne and his contemporaries. "Cape Hatteras" is an apotheosis of power:

The nasal whine of power whips a new universe . . .
Where spouting pillars spoor the evening sky,
Under the looming stacks of the gigantic power house
Stars prick the eyes with sharp ammoniac proverbs,
New verities, new inklings in the velvet hummed
Of dynamos. . . .¹⁸

In language that must have been born of the thunder of "whirling armatures" the poem rises to its apogee, and the poet breaks off to exclaim,

—O murmurless and shined
In oilrinsed circles of blind ecstasy.

To Crane the smoke, the stench, and the noise of modern industry held music and a dream.

In his early poems Crane toys with metaphysical language. "Modern Craft" and "Forgetfulness" are full of such typical paradoxes as "innocence dissolute" and "I can remember much forgetfulness." On the whole, however, his use of the image is organic and inevitable. In "Repose of Rivers," as the river (his life or man's life) reaches its destination, the exaltation of mood permits no paraphrase:

. . . . There beyond the dykes
. . . .
I heard wind flaking sapphire, like this summer,
And willows could not hold more steady sound.¹⁹

His vision of the ordered universe was sometimes broken by a sense of despair at what he saw about him, and by means of the metaphysical image his emotion is most nearly voiced. In "The Tunnel,"

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

appalled at what the subway has shown him of the social condition of machine-propelled humanity, he cries out:

Daemon, demurring and eventful yawn!
Whose hideous laughter is a bellows mirth
—Or the muffled slaughter of a day in birth—
O cruelly to inoculate the brinking dawn
With antennae towards worlds that glow and sink;—
To spoon us out more liquid than the dim
Locution of the eldest star, and pack
The conscience navelled in the plunging wind,
Umbilical to call—and straightway die!²⁰

In "Cutty Sark"²¹ he ironically calls attention to the dawn that puts out the Statue of Liberty—"that torch of hers you know"—reminding us that in this land of the free the dawn of day has come to mean the end of liberty and of the right to dream. In production of pictorial effects Crane excels, often using the image based upon nature, as did Vaughan in particular among the early metaphysicals. Rarely did he excel these lines from "O Carib Isle":

The tarantula at the lily's foot
Across the feet of the dead, laid in white sand
Near the coral beach—nor zig-zag fiddler crabs
Side-stilting from the path (that shift, subvert
And anagrammatize your name)—No, nothing here
Below the palsy that one eucalyptus left
In wrinkled shadows mourns.²²

The ecstatic element in the poetry of Crane, similar to that in the poetry of Crashaw, reaches its height in "Atlantis." Closing his great tribute to the Bridge, he writes:

From gulfs unfolding, terrible of drums,
Tall Vision-of-the-Voyage, tensely spare—
Bridge, lifting night to cycloramic crest
Of deepest day—O Choir, translating time
Into what multitudinous Verb the suns
And synergy of waters ever fuse, recast
In myriad syllables—Psalm of Cathay!
O Love, thy white, Pervasive Paradigm. . . .²³

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 46-47.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 114.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

IV

John Crowe Ransom's work affords a glimpse of almost every aspect of the metaphysical tradition. Like Donne, he deals with love and death; like Herbert, with religion; like Vaughan, with nature; like Crashaw, with childhood; and like Eliot and Crane, with fear, frustration, and vulgarity and with contemporary America. His range of metaphysical dialectics varies from the richness of Donne to the hollowness of Cleveland. To the tradition, moreover, he adds certain polished touches of his own, especially in *vers de société*. However, in discussing the metaphysical concepts of Ransom, one is at a disadvantage because his poetry lacks a crystallization of thought, a pervading philosophy. In "Two Gentlemen in Bonds" he does attempt an exposition of his beliefs when he gives an allegorical picture of the struggles of the soul between the spirit and the flesh, but the conclusion of the poem makes the choice of either equally unattractive and leaves the reader in a state of confusion. Taking individual poems, one finds that Ransom deals in general with the same subjects as the seventeenth-century poets. The theme of love is persistent, and combined with it is the idea of frustration or despair. In "Spectral Lovers"²⁴ a man and woman haunt a "thicket of April mist," long to surrender to each other; being but specters, they cannot. In "Ecologue"²⁵ Jane Sneed and John Black grimly admit that they have lost the power to love. In their youth they had been honest and un-self-conscious; then something "came flapping out of hell and wrought between" them. Through the pages of Ransom's poetry wavers an unhappy succession of unloved women—Miss Euphemia, Emily Hardcastle, the Youngest Daughter. The "equilibrists" are lovers defeated by convention, parted at the very moment of consummation by the descent of two doves reminding them of honor.²⁶ There is in Ransom, as in Donne, a considerable amount of satire of women. "Rapunzel Has Submitted Herself to Fashion" and "Miriam Tazewell" are both satires on a vapid kind of modern woman. "Here Lies a Lady," which pictures the pretty lady who blew now hot, now cold, amid

²⁴ *Chills and Fever* (New York, 1924), pp. 14-15.

²⁵ *Two Gentlemen in Bonds* (New York, 1927), p. 6.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

admiring relatives and scraps of flowers and lace, then died of "chills and fever," contains a poignant characterization of wasted womanhood. Ransom's social philosophy has nothing like the definiteness and contemporary stamp of Eliot's or Crane's, or, indeed, of the poets of the early metaphysical school. But he seems to be in revolt against the age or various aspects of it. Materialism triumphant is suggested, though without bitterness, in "Morning":²⁷ Ralph, after a moment of misty half-consciousness, wherein his world is suffused in a glorified light, suddenly finds "the dutiful mills of the brain at work" and sees "simply another morning and simply Jane." "Man without Sense of Direction," a poem reminiscent of Donne, is a portrayal of one who has everything he wants but, for the dearth in himself, can feel nothing.

Spaced round with perfect Forms
There is no moon of them that draws
His flood of being, but concentric storms
Heaving the seas, and quaking to their pause.²⁸

This is the same kind of man who prompted Robinson to write "Richard Cory." As Eliot created Sweeney, so Ransom creates Brady, personification of vulgarity. Greasy and old, Brady sets out to find Venus, declaring: "She is verity, else all is nit." After mistaking the "pert pewit" for the goddess and meditating on the comparative efficacy of a shotgun and a pinch of salt, he finally decides to give up rather than catch "another mere obscene female."²⁹

Death, a prevalent theme in Donne, occurs in Ransom in such poems as "Piazza Piece," where the "young lady in beauty waiting" for her true love is menaced by the gray man in the dust coat among the vines; or in "Janet Waking," where the child begs that her pet hen be wakened from her sleep

And would not be instructed in how deep
Was the forgetful kingdom of death.³⁰

His real feelings on the subject are usually camouflaged by a covering of *vers de société*.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

²⁹ "On the Road to Wockensutter," in *Chills and Fever*, pp. 78-79.

³⁰ *Two Gentlemen in Bonds*, p. 26.

Religion is a preoccupation of Ransom's. "Night Voices"³¹ plays with, rather than postulates, the theory that belief in a "promise to annul the tomb" may impart a new purpose to cripple, "meek laborious," and "tight-lipped righteous." Could they but "slough their warty envelope" in a hereafter, they might know joy unimagined before. The poem, suggesting in form a medieval *débat*, reaches no conclusion, because in contrast with mystic hope is the sober fact that "carcasses so visibly do rot" and "carrion telleth truth." "Adventure This Side Pluralism"³² is an admonition and a plea. Out of his loneliness God created all forms of life; but in creating them for obedience, he, Obsolescent Hierarchy, made a sad mistake; for they, essence of deity, conceived of themselves as wholes, not fragments, and in a struggle for power began "swimming deep in fratricide." The conception of "man and beast and Thingdom," all parts of Primal Unity, is not unlike Vaughan's, but in Ransom's mind is the social turmoil of twentieth-century life, which might be brought to some order through a recollection of its relation to God. The use of Neo-Platonic terminology relates this poem to poems by members of the seventeenth-century school.

Ransom's use of the metaphysical image is characterized by great variety and facility. In many instances, indulging a whim to heap word upon word and idea upon idea incongruously, he ends by producing a Clevelandism:

Jesus proclaimed the truth.
Paul's missionary tooth
Shredded it fine, and made a paste,
No particle going to waste,
Kneaded it and caked it
And buttered it and baked it
(And indeed all but digested
While Jesus went to death and rested)
Into a marketable compound.³³

Humor is rare in the poetry of Eliot and almost nonexistent in that of Crane; but the poems of Ransom are full of light humor, pointed by the metaphysical image. Sometimes his humor is satirical, as in

³¹ *Chills and Fever*, pp. 72-73.

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 74-77.

³³ *Two Gentlemen in Bonds*, p. 31.

"Amphibious Crocodile," where he pokes fun at the man who forsakes his native habitat for travel and the isms of an artificial existence. More often it is light and whimsical, as in "Jack's Letter,"³⁴ where the adolescent lover, writing to his Rose, plants himself "on four sides of the folio" "in bulbs of cunning charactry," which she must water with her tears if they are to grow. Ransom makes several excursions into fantasy and uses the metaphysical image. In "First Travels of Max"³⁵ we read of the wood "shrill with silence"; "the timber . . . degenerate"; "the bubbles on the tarn . . . breath of a black beast," "formed like a spider, white bag for entrails"; the witch's bosom "yellow as butter." The words and the associations they engender enhance the fantastic effect. Like the other poets who have been discussed, Ransom uses the image in pictorial or emotional passages. He is particularly successful in creating the grotesque:

Think of the happy dead men lying in ponds
 Filled of rainwater—eyeballs rolling wide
 In the comfort of that undusty unlit tide—
 Ears flowered green and huge beyond the bawling
 That shook the air of earth—tumbled or crawling
 On naked legs among the lily-fronds.³⁶

The changing philosophy of three centuries has converted the personal God of Donne into an abstraction, but the impulse which drives Crane or Eliot toward union with an ideal of Beauty is as strong as that which drove Donne or Herbert toward their God. The interpretation of the longing for spiritual union in terms of physical desire and appeasement is as natural to the twentieth century as to the seventeenth. The perception of human insufficiency and degradation which distressed Donne equally distresses the twentieth-century poets and leads them to meditate on the evils of life and to contemplate death. The probing into man's soul and the questioning of his place in the cosmos are characteristic of the poetry of both periods. Once the human mind conceives of life as struggle and attempts to determine the "role assigned to the human spirit in the great drama of existence" (as Grierson puts it), metaphysical

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 48-49.

³⁵ *Chills and Fever*, pp. 42-44.

³⁶ *Two Gentlemen in Bonds*, p. 76.

poetry arises. The use of the metaphysical image is necessary to adequate expression of metaphysical thought, and the modern poets employ it in satire, humor, irony, and in emotional and pictorial writing as did their seventeenth-century predecessors. Hence, though the poetry of such men as Eliot, Crane, and Ransom is so unfamiliar to our age as to have shocked it into thought, a comparison of it with poetry of three hundred years ago shows that the contemporary metaphysicals are actually but breaking old ground anew.

TEACHING POETIC APPRECIATION THROUGH QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

WILLIAM J. GRACE¹

I

Not often enough is a *modus operandi* discovered in regard to criticism that can be successfully applied to classroom teaching. The method here in presented is one which I have tested for the last four years in two colleges, and I think it has a value beyond that of mere novelty.

The theory behind the method is one with which most of us are familiar. It goes back in critical tradition to the *Ars poetica* of Horace and to his *callida junctura*, but I prefer to use the word, "synthesis," in my classes. In order to interpret and evaluate any given poem, I look upon it from the point of view of the number and quality of the syntheses it possesses. The synthesis consists in a type of expression, at once powerful and unique, in which the individual words are lost in the combination of which they are a part. Not one word can be altered or taken away without destroying the synthesis. In other words, the point in any given verse where the poetry is most concentrated is the synthesis—the indissoluble union of one word, image, and sound with one or more other words, images, and sounds.

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As an illustration of the synthesis we might consider the use of language in Francis Thompson's "The Hound of Heaven." A metaphor featuring a horse, symbol of speed, has been used throughout the poem ("clung to the whistling mane of every wind") to signify the poet's mad, unavailing flight from God; and, eventually, with a growing power of suggestion from the interrelated imagery, a wonderful line is created containing a synthesis and a coinage: "sea-snortings."

I knew how the clouds arise
Spumed of the wild sea-snortings.

The expression "sea-snortings" constitutes a good example of synthesis, because in it is a crystallization of the whole poetic development. Examples are, of course, countless, but we might consider at this point two more that are very familiar to us all. It sometimes happens that a line or two will crystallize the entire poignancy of a poem. Such lines, surely, are those uttered by Adam in *Paradise Lost* when he has learned of Eve's sin:

From his slack hand the garland wreathed for Eve
Down dropped, and all the faded roses shed.

The roses faded with the conscious knowledge of sin—a brilliant use of the pathetic fallacy. The other example I wish to take is from Shakespeare. Often the poet's synthesis is so unusual that he is forced to coin a new word, as, for example, the famous lines from *Macbeth*:

. . . . No, this my hand will rather
The multitudinous seas incarnadine,
Making the green one red.

Shakespeare coins the word "incarnadine," a heavy word suggestive of the enormity of the crime committed.

II

Now the syntheses in poetry can vary according to the work they perform. Some are purely decorative; some are intuitive and symbolic . . . the image in the synthesis being the intuitive thought itself. Some syntheses are predominantly emotional; some are predominantly intellectual; some are predominantly musical. I hold

that the discovery and classifying of the syntheses is the very first step in understanding, appreciating, and criticizing a poem. We descend to examinable particulars, which Dr. Johnson praised as the ideal method of critical procedure.

To illustrate our procedure, we shall assume that we are going to interpret Keats's "The Eve of St. Agnes." First of all, the poem would be read in class, stanza by stanza. At the conclusion of each step in the reading, the students would be asked to enter in their exercise books what they consider to be the syntheses in the poem. Upon the syntheses collected, the students would form generalizations which would be the first tentative steps in critical analysis. In other words, the syntheses would form a heightened selection of the content of the whole poem. The students would be proceeding along the lines of artistic criticism. They would be making a heightened imitation—to use Aristotle's words—of the poem, just as the poet was making a heightened imitation of life.

Experiments over four years show a reaction to the poem that is very nearly constant. These are the syntheses, stanza by stanza.

1. The hare limp'd trembling
Imaginative exaggeration most concretely representing the *cold*.
2. The sculptur'd dead, on each side, seem to freeze,
Emprison'd in black, purgatorial rails
Massive effect, significance of *black, purgatorial*.
3. The silver, snarling trumpets
Snarling, metaphorically applied to the defiant trumpets in contrast to the massive cold.
4. The carved angels, ever eager-eyed,
Star'd, where upon their heads the cornice rests.
With hair blown back, and wings put cross-wise on their breasts.
Eager-eyed, crystallizing suggestion of impetuous devotion.
7. The music, yearning like a God in pain
Poetic exaggeration achieved by adding a *God*.
9. Beside the portal doors
Buttress'd from moonlight, stands he,
Musical synthesis, contrast between labial and nasal consonants, and the harsh, separating *buttress'd*.

13. He found him in a little moonlight room
Pale, lattic'd, chill and silent as a tomb
Musical synthesis.
15. Feebly she laugheth in the languid moon
Musical synthesis, contrast between shrill trochaic foot and resonant iambs.
16. Sudden a thought comes like a full-blown rose
Brilliant image of thought flashing upon the mind as a luxurious rose would hit the sense of sight.
23. Paining with eloquence her balmy side;
As though a tongueless nightingale should swell
Her throat in vain, and die, heart-stifled, in her dell.
Brilliance of double metaphor, *tongueless nightingale*.
24. [The whole stanza; in particular:]
Innumerable of stains and pleasant dyes
As are the tiger-moths deep damask'd wings
Music and tone-color.
A shielded scutcheon blush'd with blood of queens and kings
Dramatic effect of color.
25. Rose-bloom fell on her hands
Particularization of color in the manner of a painter.
27. As though a rose should shut, and be a bud again
Imaginative brilliance of image and perfect appropriateness.
31. These delicates he heap'd with glowing hand
Glowing hand crystallizes writer's love of color and light.
... sumptuous they stand
In the retired quiet of the night
Crystallize writer's love of contrasting colors.
36. ... he arose
Ethereal, flush'd, and like a throbbing star
The energy of fast-moving color.
Into her dream he melted, as the rose
Blendeth its odour with the violet
The symbolic use of color to present action.

While I do not aim in this list to be entirely representative or inclusive, I think it is sufficiently broad to indicate the method and its results. First of all, the student does not regard the "Eve of St. Agnes" primarily as a story. (Actually, it lacks the elements of a

good story—character interest, fast-moving action, and suspense.) In going over the list of syntheses, he is immediately struck by the importance, and even the self-conscious use, of color. This leads him to understand Keats's main purpose in the poem—to present a picture of rich and varied color, to create atmosphere rather than recount a narrative.

Not only does this method of collecting the syntheses give the class an immediate insight into the poem. It all serves a less noble, but no less useful, purpose as a system of mnemonics. With each of the foregoing syntheses the circumstances of the poem can be remembered by association. For example, to take the first synthesis, "the hare limp'd trembling" recalls the whole winter scene and its attendant circumstances. To take the last on the list above, ". . . as the rose blendeth its odour with the violet," indicates the situation and character of the two lovers. Students should be taught to reconstruct the story and its connecting links from these keys.

III

Such a method I have found extremely useful in classes in comparative criticism. Remember that a synthesis may not always belong to the same category of greatness. Therefore, not only the number but the quality of the syntheses give us our first certain guides in assessing comparative differences and merits. One assignment which statistically has been of the greatest interest to me has been a comparison of the four great elegies, "Lycidas," "Elegy Written in a Country Church-Yard," "Adonais," "In Memoriam." Space prevents a complete presentation of figures and the conclusions to be drawn from them regarding all four poems. The worthwhileness of the method in regard to comparative criticism can be indicated from Table 1, dealing with two of the foregoing elegies, "Lycidas" and "Adonais."

The conclusion would be that the "Adonais" is a more intuitive (therefore, more mystical), a more ornate, and a more emotional poem than the "Lycidas." The "Lycidas," on the other hand, is more intellectual in tone and relies on musical effects rather than on imagery for its power. Whether the length of the poem should enter into these comparisons is a very difficult point to decide.

Apparently, while it should be kept in mind, it has no definite quantitative relationship.

The value of this method is not, of course, absolute. Many points of structure, of literary influence, of purpose are outside its boundary. In relation to these other points—and not regarded merely in itself—it is of the greatest value. And it is particularly important

TABLE 1

	"Adonais" (495 Lines)	"Lycidas" (193 Lines)
Intuitive syntheses.....	3.3	1.0
Decorative syntheses.....	1.5	1.0
Musical syntheses.....	1.0	1.6
Emotional syntheses.....	2.0	1.0
Intellectual syntheses.....	1.0	1.5

in stimulating class interest, because it makes poetry tangible and real to students who may tend to regard it as nebulous and unexamined.

FRESHMAN COMPOSITION: ITS GREAT MIDDLE CLASS

W. ALAN GROVE¹

Like the professors, we, the younger, less experienced college English instructors have heard and continue to hear from anyone interested enough to express himself on the subject of composition that students no longer know how to write, how to organize in essay form even their painfully immature conclusions, or, as the final crushing exhibition of incompetency, how to project on paper a modest paragraph without a number of blatant errors in sentence structure, punctuation, and grammar. We are further harassed by our critic's pointing out—as if the inevitable weekly theme were not eloquent proof—that by home environment, by the comedians, sport commentators, and crooners of radio and movie, is this evil

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done. And if on occasion the critic darkly hints that the teaching profession has gone far in the wrong direction since the day of the little red schoolhouse, the stronger of us assume a mask of inscrutability, and the weaker take self-inventory, casting over such tags as "the molding of youth" and "the challenge" to the instructor, and then return to the classroom to rehash tradition-honored lectures: "Culture," "The Effectiveness of Good Writing," or—as an undisguised appeal to the Philistine—"Grammar: A Fundamental Requirement of a Business Success." Seldom, however, does the lecture kindle and light the mind of the student. Week after week the themes pass between him and instructor and back again, neatly checked and annotated in red pencil. The critic continues to point and to hint and the instructor to remain inscrutable or to revamp his lectures, consulting his colleagues for an opinion on the relative merits of new compilations of model essays and the latest treatment of grammar.

One reaction is that the instructor, discovering improvement of the student to be slow and the task of realizing it to involve slavish attention to detail, resigns himself to his composition sections and plans an eventual transfer of his main interest and counsel to the students who have somehow met the composition requirement and graduated to literature courses, where mastery of the comma fault, the dangling participle, and the paragraph is assumed, and where the beauties of language are discussed and enjoyed by instructor and class, not dissected and imitated. What may intensify this reaction is his growing awareness that composition carries with it no prestige: that to him has been assigned a composition schedule either to help him financially toward the advanced degree or to train him for an attractive literature schedule, only slightly tarnished by the inclusion of a section or two of composition, to be awarded "for having served time," as one professor happily phrased it. But the instructor is ambitious. The work of the moment will be conscientiously done.

Although the instructor, like his superiors, feels a responsibility, the situation remains unchanged. Somewhere between the students blessed with a flair for writing and the unfortunates—those who, depending upon the institution in question, are admitted on warning to sink or swim, or are admitted and quickly relegated, by mercy of

the placement test and the "feeler theme," to subcomposition—somewhere between these two extremes the instructor finds his gethsemane, "the great middle class." Nor can he avoid his gethsemane by insisting that more comprehensive instruction in the mechanics of composition, if not in the art of writing, is the province of the grammar and high schools, however effective such placing of the responsibility might be in alleviating the task of the college instructor at some future day. For, granted that a drastic reorganization of the entire composition program in the lower forms be proved possible, and granted that the new program be initiated within a reasonable length of time, years would elapse before it furnished the college with more adequately prepared Freshman classes.

Indicative of the pertinency of the problem is the literature every mail seems to deliver to the wistful instructor—announcements and folders, some as attractive as the prospectus of a southern cruise, and which, like the cruise, seem to promise both him and the students a delightful voyage, the eventual destination being, however, not tropical islands but a far lovelier haven, a utopian campus of correct speech and expressive, well-organized, and mechanically correct themes and term papers. But the most promising enticements seldom woo him from his own tried methods. His experience, although limited, has probably taught that all compilations, all grammars, and all "approaches" are fundamentally alike. Almost without exception these announcements cavalierly ignore the crux of the difficulty and remain politely silent on why students remain impervious to the most subtle attacks. Doggedly they claim their merit to be a matter of emphasis upon certain essentials of grammar, technique, or both. Emphasis! Under the conventional composition setup there is no time for emphasis. The student has been poorly nourished. To build him up, his diet must include a portion of all these nutritious things. But one instructor—whatever his qualifications may be—cannot cope with the task of preparing and administering the diet and of charting the metabolism. He cannot, within a period of ten months, treat adequately sentence structure, punctuation, and grammar, then proceed to matters of vocabulary and good usage, and finally—what is most important—correlate these details in such a manner that the mediocre student, applying

in practice what he has learned in theory, will bring forth a theme worthy of a college undergraduate.

Should it be conceded that the task is formidable, why not allot it to more than one instructor? Why cannot noncredit remedial classes provide the sheer grounding in, or review of, English fundamentals and the elementary mechanics of writing such as the topic sentence, subordination, and transition? Pretend for the moment that this innovation is in operation. To forestall amused smiles from the men charged with the securing of funds for new programs, let it be asserted quietly but firmly that this one has at least the merit of being inexpensive. Remember, the mediocre English students comprise this enrolment, not the comparatively few students with guinea-pig propensities or of subcomposition level, who may require individualized guidance classes, necessitating tutor-like supervision and elaborate progress-attainment charts, some painfully detailed. Designed to reach large groups, to take students in "wholesale lots," the program accomplishes its purpose without overburdening the instructor. He grades no themes, a dispensation of value. Not interested in research, he willingly allows the validity of the program to rest not on charts but on the verdict of the best of all judges: the composition instructor, members of other departments, and the students themselves.

Obviously the more important task—certainly the final one—is still the composition instructor's, that of crystallizing through correlation the benefits of this specialized instruction. Probably his function has not been materially altered from what, under the usual plan, constitutes his province in theory but not in practice. Relieved of the spade work, he now has leisure for those fruitful but time-demanding lectures and conferences on improvement of style and word choice.

As with all suggested innovations, it remains to be proved whether foresight and some experimentation would eventuate in a practical remedial program of both fundamentals and mechanics of writing. But the probability is no pipe dream. In the college of liberal arts at Miami University we have remedial instruction in English fundamentals. As I was placed in charge of the program at its inception five years ago, excusable, perhaps, is a somewhat detailed explana-

tion of how the necessary simplification and effectiveness has been evolved.

For all Freshmen whose score on a placement test falls within the rather wide range between 50 at one extreme and 80 at the other, two hours of noncredit remedial instruction—one of lecture and one of combined lecture and laboratory—supplements the regular composition course. Dependent upon the placement scores, the enrolment fluctuates yearly; but an average of three hundred thirty remedial students, exclusive of students in other courses, has been my schedule. That one instructor can handle all the details of the program, once the students are sent to him for registration, and that the students themselves usually acquire, by the end of the semester, a satisfactory command of the material without "homework" confirm the practicality of the remedial English setup.

This economy of the student's time, although not originally purposed nor now mandatory, seems to result from the absence of the distractions and of the shuttling back and forth unavoidable in the customary composition class, which attempts to carry on simultaneously many phases of theme-writing, with a sacrifice either of drill in the fundamentals or of an adequate treatment of the art of writing, rather than with, as at Miami, an emphasis on the latter and a comparatively light touch on the former that, together, make for a better balanced, more harmonious procedure. For the student to master grammar easily and to perceive that the basis of certain constructions is sound reasoning, not whim, there must be an uninterrupted, carefully directed drive. Taking nothing for granted, but beginning with an explanation of the parts of speech—particularly of their functions—the work proceeds thoroughly but with surprising rapidity through sentence structure, punctuation, and grammar, although perhaps seeming to linger a disproportionate length of time over certain fundamentals, a perfect command of which, however, has proved itself valuable, if not indispensable.

What makes possible this large semester enrolment, without defeating the purpose of the program, is the utilization of flexible, time-saving schemes, the more important ones involving the grading of the weekly laboratory assignments, conferences, and the scheduling of examinations at opportune stages during the semester. The

laboratory exercise, allotted thirty minutes, is graded in the ten-minute interval following its completion. The students merely detach the perforated pages from the workbook, exchange, check and score according to the instructor's direction, and then return them to their owners for examination during the ensuing discussion of the fundamentals in question. At the close of the hour, in alphabetical order, the tests are left with the instructor for classbook recording of grades. To tax the resourcefulness of the well-meaning but misguided individual tempted to pad his roommate's grades, the tests circulate differently, although this precaution is really not necessary. Casually to remark that such solicitude raises the class average at the expense of the individual not fortunate enough to be seated in the proximity of a conspirator invariably causes the wrath of the class to descend on the head of the offender.

The value of conferences cannot be overestimated, but to attempt personal ones would be absurd. The problem has been solved by group conferences with students having difficulty with some one fundamental already discussed in class. Because of the advisability of attempting quickly to correct error, the aim is to schedule conferences between the laboratory period and the lecture hour. The student, motivated by a particular exercise score, may voluntarily register for the conference; and the instructor, after glancing at the class record, advises others to attend. Obviously, although not originally so intended, the appointment book itself happily suggests what attitude the instructor, handicapped by classes that permit little personal opinion about the earnestness of his students, should take when confronted by those fatalistic people who attribute poor grades to inaptitude. No mention of their names reduces even the vociferous to a silence which allows for a few constructive suggestions. Indeed, it might be ventured that this practice of group conferences is to be preferred in remedial work even when the personal ones are possible. Both the instructor and the students terminate the interview feeling as physically fit as at the start—not exhausted, as could be their condition after the personal encounter, where, engendered by the student's aversion to a diagnosis, an atmosphere of faint embarrassment or reticence saps the strength while the instructor struggles to dispel its progress-retarding chilliness. That the effec-

tiveness of the remedial conference seems in no way impaired by a maximum of twenty students further demonstrates the monetary feasibility of the program; for the instructor can schedule an ample number, thus eliminating any possible need of outside assistance.

Supervision of the program has been further facilitated by the co-operation of the composition instructor. A hint of his displeasure at adverse remedial reports suffices to keep the habitual laggard in line. Of invaluable assistance, also, is the growing interest manifested by members of other departments, who demand from their Freshman students grammatical term papers and examinations and who suggest remedial English to the offenders. This year, for the first time, notices are being sent at the middle and end of the first semester to the faculty at large, inviting them to submit the names of these people before a specified date, so that they may be enrolled as a group in a special section. The plan is to report to the professor the progress of his students and to welcome further comment concerning their application of the rules. Although speculation about its success would be premature, this innovation, aside from the immediate benefits, should be persuasive of the fact that composition is more than a prerequisite of the Freshman year, somehow not applicable to upperclassmen. One university regulation of perspicacity, already in effect, withholds final credit for Freshman composition until the end of the first semester of the senior year, to make possible, by consent of the proper authority, the return to composition or remedial English of students whose written work in any advanced course seems to be below standard. Thus, Freshman Week assistants and Greek-letter societies, committed to the wisdom of their advice, appear to urge the fledglings to master at the conventional stage of their career what otherwise may react to their embarrassment.

Four examinations are given during the semester: one after the completion of each of the three divisions of the program—sentence structure, punctuation, and grammar—and a more comprehensive examination at the end of the semester. Failure to pass any one of the intrasemester tests results in the removal of the student to a section repeating that particular phase of the work. Of the comparatively few people who fail the comprehensive examination, additional instruction is required the second semester.

Perchance the remedial student, like the reader of *Shirley*, has been warned that before him lies "something real, cool, and solid . . . something unromantic as Monday morning." The workbook, designed for this particular program, is intended to discourage attempts to eat sparingly of the diet of "unleavened bread with bitter herbs, and no roast lamb." At the outset, to camouflage this unappetizing fare, the binding, changed yearly, capitalizes on the comparatively recent trend toward a bit of color—a praiseworthy, if somewhat belated, recognition not only of an established psychological finding but also of the fact that, while the scholarly mind may scorn to judge a book by its cover, the undergraduate mind is neither scholarly nor scornful of such details.

But, belying the rather showy exterior, the prosaic interior does not invalidate the simplicity indispensable to the nature and scope of the program. It is merely a series of exercises. This series, however, is cumulative in the extreme sense that, for example, the first punctuation exercise involves only the subject of the first lecture hour, and that each succeeding exercise assumes mastery of all rules discussed to date. Moreover, a number, never a heading, identifies the exercise. In this way the student is gently taken away from one-error sentences—pointedly listed under solution-betraying captions like "The Use of the Semicolon"—and brought to a consideration of longer sentences which involve several rules. The possibility of pigeonholed knowledge is lessened. Quite as easily, the instructor finds himself provided with an up-to-date record of the student's assimilation and retention of the material covered.

An unlimited supply of sentences would seem to be a commonplace; but it assumes the proportions of a luxury because, curiously, it usually is not available at the moment. This proverbial lack has been satisfied by the workbook with a supply not generous but abundant. It is sufficient to illustrate the lecture, so that the instructor may focus the eye where it should be, on the unpredictable back row, and so that the class need not copy an excessive amount of blackboard scribbling. It is sufficient to allow both the instructor and the class a record of the laboratory hour, the one for grades and the other for reviews. Most satisfactory, a sufficiency remains for the

longest group conference; and the conference itself, the blackboard forgotten, can be a casual, round-table discussion.

But to provide an element of surprise the menu is not printed in the workbook. This omission of the customary interspersing of explanatory material forces the student to be alert in class, and there to learn what, otherwise, relying on the text, he might defer mastering until the work so piled up that "cram sessions" with his classmates would be his only hope of salvation. And the instructor, how does he profit? His task is lightened. No longer is there the danger that he may seem to be an automaton, reiterating mechanically the gist of the printed page, reiterating what the student so disposed can easily predict by leafing through the next chapter.

But cumulative exercises and the absence of explanatory material alone do not make the student alert. Yet alert he must be—alert not only to insure his own progress but also to save himself, his classmates, and the instructor from the exquisite boredom reminiscent of that inflicted too frequently by "lame-duck" sections and by uninspired prerequisites. The reason the pall may more readily settle over the remedial classroom is not that a study of English fundamentals need be, by the nature of things, more dismal than a study of French grammar, but that in college the training comes fairly "late in life," after the student has been conditioned to the wrong things and when, if ever, he prides himself on always doing the right things.

So perhaps the work cut out for the instructor is peculiarly individualized in the sense that his forte cannot be the infectious enthusiasm or attainment which now, looking back on our own halcyon college years, we realize made of some professors and their courses a delightful experience or our first glimpse into realms of knowledge and speculation hitherto unsuspected. Of a certainty it would be bathos for a remedial-English instructor either to attempt to fire his students with an enthusiasm for grammar or himself to expect loyalty because of his mastery of the subject. Consequently, barred from this avenue, yet faced with noncredit classes averaging seventy-five students, he must be genuinely interested not in the theory of grammar but in students; and without the slightest hint, or even

awareness, of condescension he must associate himself intimately with their welfare. This is the attribute of successful instruction which must be emphasized in remedial English. And, contrary to first impression, the noncredit aspect of the program need not be a handicap. In actuality it fosters a relationship best likened, in spite of the enrolment, to that of tutor and student, which, of course, concerns itself with ways to raise grades, not—and this is a fine distinction—with the cold reality of determining what the final grade should be.

Unfortunately, however, no mortal survives unscarred one hour of unalleviated grammar, especially a student who, finding the subject difficult, carefully follows through an explanation until, sooner or later, restlessness manifests itself, gradually spreading over the entire classroom. The wise instructor guards jealously against this undue fatigue by making of digressions a virtue. For, while rebelling against the appellation of missionary and offended by that of cheerleader, he may acknowledge a certain kinship to the circus ringmaster. To secure a total of forty-five minutes of drill in one ring he permits, on occasion, a total of fifteen minutes for recuperation in the other. From the "recesses" the student returns, greatly refreshed, to a consideration of these worth-while but mundane affairs. The best entertainment is for the instructor to decide. One excellent precaution is the inclusion, in the instructor's notebook and less frequently in the class text, of strategically spaced sentences which serve either to illustrate an amusing error in grammar or—not too obviously—to remind the instructor of an interesting anecdote. Incidentally, the feeblest witticism meets with flattering appreciation, seeming here to sparkle and effervesce as elsewhere it never could. In a word, the students are grateful. Best of all, they do learn. At the end of the semester, class and instructor emerge, surprisingly convinced that the experience was "not so bad."

A LETTER ON LITERATURE IN THE GENERAL COLLEGE

ZAY RUSK SULLENS¹

"What form should the teaching of literature take in a junior college devoted to general education?" a college administrator asked me recently. Then, as he discovered by my face that he had exposed himself to the reply of a person only too delighted to talk on the subject, he waved his hand and said, "Write me a letter about it." I took him at his word and wrote the letter, restraining myself to only a few thousand words. But apparently he did not actually want even to read the letter, for he returned it with the notation, "Send this to *College English*."

So here is the letter. I hope it will have replies.

MY DEAR DR. ———:

On the occasion of your last visit to our college you raised the question "What form should instruction in literature take in a junior college interested in general education?"

In attempting to answer this question, I shall first ask and answer certain preliminary questions.

What are some of the values which literature offers?

The values of literature may be summarized as recreational and educative. In practice, the two types of value come simultaneously; i.e., whatever other values it gives, literature simultaneously gives recreational value. If the reading is not enjoyable, either the book or the reader's approach must be changed.

Recreational values involve enjoyment, including aesthetic satisfaction and change from the immediate situation to another situation.

Educative values are numerous. For example, literature provides acquaintance with points of view foreign to one's own. Particularly in books in which characters speak, the reader finds a variety of

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thoughts, some true and some untrue. Acquaintance with thoughts foreign to one's own tends to induce a habit of weighing opposing ideas and a habit of tolerance.

Literature encourages widening of interests. A great variety of subjects appear in literature, particularly in connection with different characters and different locales, and these subjects are enjoyably impressed on the reader.

Literature increases understanding of human nature. Perennial hates and loves, foibles and nobilities of man appear in literature from the earliest to the most recent. Literature introduces one to a wide personal acquaintance. In life one tends to know people of one's own social level. In literature one meets and comes to know well (because a good author knows how to select the significant elements in a character) rich and poor, genius and moron, fellow-citizen and foreigner, good and bad.

Literature affords vitalized knowledge of social problems. I say "vitalized" because a problem of poverty or a historical cataclysm seems vital when one knows and lives with the individuals who experience the problem or the cataclysm.

Literature is the prime means of integration. In literature the student finds combined in significant association elements he has met in philosophy, in history, in religion, in sociology, in art, in travel, etc.

Literature trains the emotions. In good literature one is made to feel the significant issues of life until gradually he learns that the insignificant incidents and accidents of life are not worth strong emotion.

Literature gives opportunity for vicarious experience. Experience is a great educator. Yet many experiences one may not actually undergo without undue loss of time or other untoward consequences. Vicarious experience gives growth without the untoward consequences.

Literature makes for awareness of the ways to success in character. Even in books in which the heroes fail, the reader builds up in his own mind the path to success which should have been taken at each decisive point.

What is the purpose of a "course" in literature?

The purpose of a course in literature is to increase the probability of the student's securing the above-mentioned values both now and through the years after college.

Can we prescribe a set of books which will best give these values to all students?

No. We cannot say that any one set of books will give these values to all students. A book which challenges one student may only confuse or bore another.

Can the value of a piece of literature be conveyed by a teacher's or a critic's statement of its meaning?

No. If that were possible, we should rely on brief expositions of thought and have no use for poems, novels, drama. The truth is, the author writes a novel or a drama because the total picture of life there given is what he wishes to express. Character, action, form, and thought are related and intertwined in a piece of literature, and they must make their united impression on the reader. For example, I may exhort students to meet trouble with constructive action rather than with self-pity; but when a student feels Hamlet's failure at that point, he has an experience which is entirely different from my bare admonition. Such value in literature can be assimilated only through direct contact.

What tends to happen in a literature "course"?

The student tends to be concerned with the facts about literature and with teacher's and writers' expositions which may offer the right answers to examination questions rather than with unhampered, direct contact with the literature itself.

What other bad tendency accompanies a traditional literature course?

There is a tendency for some students to look upon reading as a task to be got through and dismissed rather than as an activity to be enjoyed. This tendency is due in part to the fact that assignments are ordinarily made without respect to individual interests and abilities.

Why care whether or not the student finds enjoyment in his reading?

Enjoyment and receptivity seem to go hand in hand in literature—I am not certain why. It may be that lack of enjoyment sets up a barrier; more likely, lack of enjoyment is diagnostic of a certain unfitness of the student and the particular piece of literature. Moreover, lack of enjoyment militates against continuance of reading after the course is completed.

Does the necessity of enjoyment mean that the student must read only those books which are easy for him?

No. The matter of enjoyment is dependent upon the student's being able to comprehend, but not upon his being able to comprehend effortlessly. Indeed, enjoyment is greater if all one's powers are called into play. However, the student should be given more relaxing books at intervals, whenever the challenge of the difficult ones wearies him beyond the point of enjoyment.

Does the necessity of enjoyment mean that the student should be given only his favorite type of book?

No, the enjoyment as well as other values will be greater both now and after college if the student draws on a variety of literary types. Hence if a student thinks he does not like biography, the teacher's task is to find a biography which he is certain the particular student will enjoy readily (probably not Boswell's *Life of Johnson*), persuade the student to read it, and thus lead the student to experience for himself the pleasure of a wider range of types.

We now approach the major question:

What type of literature course seems to be indicated by the foregoing conclusions?

These conclusions seem to point to a literature course which (a) gives the individual student the greatest possible direct contact with literature suited to him and which (b) best insures the continuance of suitable reading interest after college. Success in the former aim indicates probability of success in the latter.

In other words, we find our logic pointing to individual reading under the personal direction of a teacher who knows both literary resources and the individual student.

Will individual reading prepare a student to "go on" in literature?

The individual reading course is an excellent preparation for specialization. The great handicap of specializing students is lack of broad reading background and lack of habits of independent judgment. (Because of both these lacks in the preparation of teachers of literature, high-school courses and college courses have become almost slavishly standardized, reflecting general timidity regarding literature not in the teacher's own past courses. With the wealth of fresh, excellent writing available, such slavishness is absurd.)

In selecting reading suitable to lower levels of ability, is it necessary to employ worthless books?

No. There is an ample supply of high-class literature of sufficient simplicity and clarity and appeal to be enjoyed by our weakest students.

What shall we do about the student who is a slow reader or who has poor comprehension?

The answer to this question may vary for different teachers. For myself the answer is: Let the individualized literature course provide suitable reading material and let the reading clinic provide more technical aids.

What shall we do about the gifted student?

Give him good advice on choices and plenty of latitude, then enjoy watching his growth. We could not assign to any mixed class the reading we can interest a gifted student in doing for himself.

What are some of the specific suggestions which might be made to a teacher undertaking individual teaching for the first time?

Several suggestions follow:

Do not press a student to get everything from a book that you get, or not to find values there which you do not find. A great book may be likened to a great personality. Suppose that you place a youth with an adult of rich personality for the youth's profit. You will not need a third person who can keep pointing out the virtues of that personality to the youth. You will know that the value must be in the direct contact. One youth will profit more than another from the association, but no amount of pedagogy will equalize that

difference. About all the third person can do is to introduce the student as intelligently as possible to those people who seem best fitted to be helpful. Trust the student and a great man together. Trust the student and a great book together. Something will happen when a student reads a good book with enjoyment—whether or not it is exactly what happened when you read the same book. This is a hard conception to act upon, because we are conditioned by our own past literature courses to feel a duty to the book rather than to the reader.

Rid yourself of the idea that you are "giving a course." See before you individual young people whom you want to aid in using to advantage a number of reading hours each week.

Become progressively better acquainted with each student. Conversation about the books as they are read offers an excellent opportunity for increasing personal acquaintance.

Be guided in recommendation of books by such considerations as the following:

All that you know about the student—what interests he has, whether he likes to read, what perplexes him, etc.

The fundamental truth of the book. Does it embody an appreciation of human dignity, and is it true to cause and result in human life? This rule bars both the unqualifiedly cynical and the unqualifiedly optimistic.

The artistry of the book. The perfection with which an author expresses himself qualifies the effectiveness of the book both as to enjoyment and as to other values. Note, however, that artistry is not synonymous with decorativeness or any other rhetorical device. Simple clarity may be very beautiful.

The possibility of "stretching" the student's ability to read with enjoyment books to which his interests and abilities are not now equal. Patient addition to the student's reading experience month after month will bring such a result gradually, while a forced hasty advance will probably result unfavorably.

Provide opportunities for the student to experience the pleasure of reading aloud to a group. The individual student may read to a small group short poems which he has selected and rehearsed, and

he may read aloud excerpts from books which he has liked and preserved in his reading diary.

Encourage the student to experience the pleasure of discussing books. Discuss books with the individual student. Give the student ample opportunity to express himself; maintain an attitude of respect toward the student's sincere reactions. Add your own ideas not as corrections to the student but as additional possibilities for him to consider.

Informal group discussions add further value and pleasure. These occur spontaneously in the residence halls and in small groups assembled in the conference room at the beginning of conference hours. Because the various students are reading different books, natural curiosity prompts questions.

Enable the student to recognize the possibility for improvement in his own comprehension by your mentioning values apparent to you which he may not have grasped; but make it clear that the student is not expected to memorize and give back on an examination any values which he himself does not actually experience.

Encourage the student to aid his retention of values by keeping a personal record of his reading (reading diary). Passages from books read should form a part of this record.

Encourage the student to scrutinize frankly the values he himself has drawn from a book, to the end that he may develop an independent judgment of books.

As to literary criticisms, published book reviews, etc., discourage the student from considering them authoritative. Let him read them whenever his curiosity prompts him to learn what others have found in a book; and be sure that he accepts them as just that—i.e., what *others* have found, not what he himself *ought* to find or to say he finds.

Encourage the student to become increasingly cognizant of the supply of literature from which he may select his own reading after he leaves college.

In concluding this discussion, Dr. ———, let me quote a sentence of Stephen Leacock concerning education in America: "The everlasting principle of equality has inserted itself in a place where it has no right to be, and where inequality is the breath of life." I believe that if there is any point at which recognition of individual

differences is the breath of life and the aid to sincerity, it is in so personal a matter as literature. This is the conviction by which I must teach and which I should gladly see generally adopted.

Nevertheless, I by no means oppose a colleague's acting upon an opposite conviction, and I am desirous of comments, however unfavorable, on my point of view.

Sincerely yours,
ZAY RUSK SULLENS

PLAYWRITING IN THE LIBERAL-ARTS CURRICULUM

KENNETH THORPE ROWE¹

The expansion from the traditional curricula of colleges and universities of recent years represents a healthy impulse toward broadening the educational horizon and bringing the academic world and the world outside into closer and more harmonious relationship. It is essential, however, that the academic world, especially as centered in the literary college, should not lose its identity and, thereby, its function. Every expansion is an experiment to be closely studied.

The time is opportune for taking stock of playwriting as a course-subject. The recent rapid increase in such courses and the attention attracted to the subject in the last three years by the Bureau of New Plays, with its national contests, by the American Theatre Conference, and by the fellowships of the Dramatists' Guild suggests evaluation, and the older playwriting courses have reached a degree of maturity for their functioning to have been adequately tested.

When I was asked to establish a course in playwriting at the University of Michigan eleven years ago, we were still looked upon as among the pioneers. Actually, courses in playwriting were listed in the catalogues of twenty-nine among a hundred leading colleges

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and universities surveyed, but not more than five or six represented any intensive organization. Today the number has more than doubled to sixty-five in the same group of institutions, and a thorough development of the teaching of the subject is becoming general. When the Bureau of New Plays instituted a national contest three years ago, ninety-eight colleges and universities responded with two hundred and thirty-six manuscripts. Playwriting instruction is now being given with conspicuous success in universities as widely distributed as Yale, Columbia, North Carolina, Chicago, Iowa, Montana, and Stanford. At the annual conference of the American Educational Theatre Association last year the section meeting on the teaching of playwriting was one of the largest and was generally referred to as the most interesting and alive of the conference. Out of my own eleven years with a playwriting course I have come to believe, with more and more assurance, that such a course represents neither a narrowly professional training nor dilettantism but an experience for the students of peculiarly broad educational and cultural value.

A course in playwriting in a literary college should, first of all, contribute to the cultural and intellectual development of all students who enter the course. At the same time it inevitably incorporates two other objectives: to assist talented students to become professional dramatists, and to give students the training and incentive to enter community and educational dramatic work.

The professional function has been established by the representation among our professional dramatists of university study of playwriting and by the recognition received from the professional theater. A playwriting course cannot create talent or make a playwright, but it can assist in the development of talent. Drama is perhaps the least spontaneous and freely individual form of writing. A theater as a social institution and a complex physical medium imposes elaborate conventions and rigidities of form and technique. It is also a form with a great tradition, in which historical study is of fundamental value. In fact, the experimental richness of our modern theater represents a conjunction of historical knowledge of the conventions and forms of other theaters with a new flexibility of staging made possible by modern stage mechanics and lighting. The use of

masks, of choruses, of soliloquies, of a flowing action through sixteen or twenty scenes, and of the multiple stage are revivals of old conventions fused into new forms and adapted to new meanings.² In such matters the universities can assist, and our theater has notably improved in significance and variety of interest of its drama since the universities commenced to take the place of the old stock companies as the training-ground for playwrights.

In the preparation of students for community and educational activity the courses in playwriting have a special opportunity for cultural relation to society because of the nature of drama as a social art. Playwriting is a part of the total activity of a theater. From present indications I believe the time will come—and I assuredly hope so—when every university and college and every community large enough to suport a motion-picture house will have its theater. I think of no single institution which can inject more varied cultural values into a community than a fully creative theater, with the range of interests and talents which it employs in co-ordinated, socialized activity to a common end. Then, when the play is produced, it launches upon the community a common experience which at once unifies and arouses discussion of ideas. For a community theater to realize its full opportunity, it must produce not only classics and Broadway successes but its own locally written plays from the common background and interests of the audience. Professor Koch's devoted work at the University of North Carolina through the Carolina Playmakers is an outstanding example of what development of local resources can do. North Carolina now has a distinct dramatic culture of its own which is independent of Broadway, and North Carolina is no richer in dramatic material than hundreds of other regions. At the University of Michigan, where the large Avery and Jule Hopwood awards for creative writing and the professional Ann Arbor Dramatic Season each spring add stimulus and effectiveness to well-developed playwriting and production courses, five or six major plays are written in a year as intrinsically worthy of production as a good proportion of Broadway successes,

² The relation of historical study to contemporary dramatic writing has been developed by the author of this article in chap. xiii, "Historical Conventions," of *Write That Play* (Funk & Wagnalls, 1939).

and properly of more interest to a local audience. Producible plays are not written spontaneously but out of intensive training. It is the university courses in playwriting which are providing the groundwork for the social value of fully creative community and educational theaters.

I touch but lightly on these more obvious functions of a course in playwriting in order to concentrate on the contribution to a liberal education. First of all, playwriting is a creative activity, and that is a healthy thing in itself, especially for college students. Too much of a college education is intake. Students are absorbing facts and ideas from course after course. They are learning about life from specialists in different branches of human experience and are getting it in concentrated doses. At the same time they are experiencing life themselves with the eager intensity of youth. One of the concerns of modern educators is with orientation. There have been numerous attempts to find some technique by which to unify and bring into co-ordinated relation for the student the information he is getting about history, economics, political science, literature, philosophy, chemistry, physics, and so on. Orientation courses have been established. A teacher of especial breadth of mind and learning lectures on the interrelations of the fields of study. But still it is largely intake. So far as the process goes, the student's mind is left as a sponge, absorbing. No one really possesses knowledge until he has done something with it, applied it, reorganized it for his own purposes. Education should be a stimulus to activity. Creative outlets are one of the great needs of a university. Through my years as a teacher, I have repeatedly been impressed with the happy absorption one finds on walking into a play rehearsal, the scene-building shop, an architectural drawing-room, or a modeling studio, and, when not too routinized, a laboratory—the places where the student is putting what he has studied into action through the medium of his own mind and personality. Playwriting is only one of many possible opportunities, but it is a particularly valuable one because of the variety of mental resources which it co-ordinates.

The student's mind, if he is receptive, is seething with facts, impressions, and ideas; he is thinking, but more or less chaotically, because the field of his thought is unbounded. If he is to write a play,

he immediately has to build a fence. He selects a workable, tillable area of human experience. But within that narrow area of human life he will find in play the broad forces—economic, ethical, psychological, and social—which he has studied. His thinking is given a concrete form, is made objective. When the play is finished, he can detach it from himself, put it outside, and look at it. He can look at his own thinking critically and test it. All this is true of any form of writing, but particularly true of a play because it is the most objective form. The dramatist does not speak directly in his own person as the author. He has to speak through the life that he is able to put into his play and through the characters he creates. He must understand their lives, not just his own. And he must project himself by observation and imagination so intimately into the lives of his characters that he can even give utterance to their thoughts in their own idiom, their own manner of speech. If the play is staged, the process of detachment is complete. It goes into other people's hands, and the author becomes part of the audience viewing the work critically.

As I have watched students write plays, it has seemed to me that it is not only plays they are creating; they are molding their own minds. Out of an immediate background of intellectual activity, students tend to make an intellectual approach to playwriting. They have been thinking, and they want to put their thought into the play. One of the primary requisites of a good play is that the characters be alive and that the whole thing carry conviction of its truth to life. In other words, the author of a play has to present life itself and put his ideas to work there. Sometimes he finds they are not workable. He begins to see the difference between theory and actuality; perhaps his thinking was too simple, too narrow, to cover the facts of real life, or perhaps some of his thinking was irrelevant and needed to be cast aside. Playwriting becomes a bridge between the academic world and the world outside, a step in the process of adjustment and application of knowledge. Keats wrote in a letter of the experience of writing one of his poems as "a regular stepping towards a truth." Certainly I have seen the thought of students advance and grow in the process of writing a play, and even more in the writing of successive plays.

Of course, one of the first things the student discovers is the necessity of technique, of craftsmanship. The idea that appears unworkable simply hasn't had a chance. Before he can test his observation, experience, and thought in a play, he has to learn to write a play. That is where the teaching of play-writing comes in, to assist the student to say what he wants to say. The teacher cannot create thought and experience in the student, and he should not want to impress his own thought. His job is to bring knowledge of the technical means of expression to the assistance of the student's own purpose—and then to stand by.

It all comes down to this: One part of a university education is a grocery store from which the student stocks the shelves of his mind. There is the flour, the salt, the yeast, and other necessary ingredients. The job that is left is for him to learn how to make a good loaf of bread, that is digestible and life-sustaining. A course in playwriting is a good apprentice bakeshop. Like all analogies, that fails to cover the whole ground, but it has more than a crumb of truth in it.

Another phase of the problem of education, considered as developing as well as informing the mind, is achievement of a balance between freedom and discipline, or, more accurately, a fusion of the two in single activity. Again, the writing of a play, in the exercise of the imagination through the discipline of a severely technical form, is an experience of value.

The writing of a play, like any other creation of form, develops not only the mind but the personality. It gives a sense of power, of confidence, of control of life. I am convinced that the achievement of a play has been an important influence in some surprising transformations I have seen of psychologically and socially unadjusted young people to poised, alert, integrated personality. The fact that the study of playwriting is a social activity and experience contributes to such development. The students study and discuss their common problem of dramatic technique together, each reads his play to the group, and there is group response and co-operation in criticism and suggestion. Some of the plays are given instructional production, not for the benefit of the author alone but again for the group, and that is the culminating socialization of dramatic writing.

This is a good point at which to comment on the relation of production to courses in playwriting. Playwriting is properly a laboratory course; that is one of its educational values. Production, not as a public display or a competitive award but as systematic instruction, should be an integral part of the course. The elaborate physical facilities, however, which are essential to advanced work in the production arts and also to advanced professional training in playwriting are unnecessary and even undesirable for laying the groundwork of writing for the theater. One of the things the student learns from historical study of drama is that the essentials of a theater are no more than an acting space, someone to act, someone to direct, a play, and an audience. All the rich facilities of the modern stage are instruments available to the dramatist, which he ultimately should learn, but the foundation of his art lies in language and in form. The dramatist with his play should be master in the theater. In our modern theater-world there is a tendency, which appears in schools and departments of drama as well as the professional theater, toward overemphasis on the physical attributes of the stage and for those who wield the physical elements to be granted undue influence. For basic instruction in playwriting, production on the bare essentials which have been stated is not only adequate but adapted to clear projection of language and form. At the same time, it prepares the apprentice dramatist against the sometimes too great glamour of the physical developments of our modern theater and gives him confidence in the foundations of his art.

At the University of Michigan, before the advent of *Our Town* and *The Cradle Will Rock* in the professional theater, the director who assists in playwriting had been giving first production to the students' plays without costume, makeup, or scenery. The student-actors, when not on the stage, sit in chairs along the wall in full view of the audience. Under skilful training from the director, each actor, on stepping over an imaginary line for exit, drops out of character as simply as letting a cloak fall from his shoulders, and the audience forgets him. In like manner he assumes the characterization on entrance. Under such conditions the audience's attention is completely focused into the heart of the play. If it wanders, there is

something wrong with the play, the discovery of which is one of the objects of instructional production.

It is creation of drama before production of drama that gives vitality to any theater. Among university theaters, it is significant that those of the healthiest, most rounded, and most vigorous development originated in the activity of playwriting, as in the Harvard 47 Workshop and the Carolina Playmakers. Of twelve university theaters which come most readily to my mind for distinction attained, all but one have been administered with emphasis on the creation of new drama. A theater of the production arts alone tends to become sterile, living upon the past and material foreign to itself. Dramatists create the theater even more than the theater creates the dramatist. Playwriting can bring the past and the present, the world and the community, literature and the physical aspects of the theater, into balanced and active relationship.

Out of a class of twenty students of playwriting each year, there are not likely to be more than two or three who have the particular kind of talent that should destine them, even with other circumstances favorable, for a career in the professional theater. Although the number of students with the less highly specialized talent for the growing community and educational field is much larger, the chances are at present that half the members of a class will not be directly active in relation to drama and the theater after leaving the university. The course exists to give the student a chance to find out about his interest and talent; that is one of the things a college should do, give young people opportunity to try their wings. But the experience should be fruitful in itself, time well spent, however the experiment turns out. That is a primary consideration in evaluating a liberal-arts course.

I recently sent a letter to my two hundred and thirty odd former students of playwriting asking them to inform me of any activity in drama they had engaged in since leaving the university. The returns for my initial purpose of obtaining some data on the relation of courses in playwriting to community and educational activity have been extremely interesting; but almost more interesting, because unexpected, have been the general evaluations of the course which

students who have not been active in drama equally with those who have seemed prompted to write. I had not thought of trying to gather data for anything so personal as the point of view of this article, and the letters came in when I supposed it was concluded. The letters are so definite a contribution to my subject, however, that the presentation would be incomplete without a few characteristic excerpts.

A young lawyer wrote: "I look upon the playwriting course as one of the high points in my education." An advertiser stated that, as he gets farther from his university experience and thinks more deeply about it, he finds that "four courses at Michigan are coming to be the nucleus of my school life there, and not the least among these is the work in playwriting." A young woman who is engaged professionally in dramatic writing for radio opened her letter on the contribution to personal experience: "I never go to the theater or even a movie without drawing something from that store received in the course." Another young woman, a teacher, concluded by saying: "While I have not done anything in playwriting, I believe your course was among the two or three most valuable courses in my University career. Also, it has helped me in understanding and evaluating plays I have seen since leaving the University." From a particularly successful young business executive came the following analysis: "During my years out of college I have had time to sift, to weigh, and to appraise just what I did derive from a college education. My conclusion is simply that my college training developed my capacity to appreciate. By this I mean an appreciation not only of the various forms of the arts, but appreciation of the garden in which art grows which is life itself. And as I have analyzed all of the factors which brought this about I have come to the honest conclusion that my training in playwriting was one of the most important forces toward this end."

The study of playwriting is also inevitably a study of dramatic literature and the history of the theater. The letters I have received confirm the assurance I had come to feel for every student of playwriting in college—those who never write another play equally with those who do—that they will go out from college with appreciation both of drama as literature and drama in the theater that will be a

rich resource of pleasure and of broadening experience for the rest of their lives. They have analyzed plays with a thoroughness and minuteness that makes them aware of a hundred points of response to a play for every one experienced by an untrained person. They grasp the meaning of a play as a whole through appreciation of all its parts. The great dramatic works of the past are alive to them in a special way. They are not finished and put away between the covers of a book, but are plays in process of creation. They realize Shakespeare and Ibsen at work on their plays in a theater and understand more fully what a dramatist is doing in a play because they have tried doing it themselves. For the new plays of our own theater they have acquired a background for perception and evaluation.

I trust it is obvious that no implication is intended that playwriting courses fill the functions of courses in literature. A course in playwriting is highly specialized: it presents only one form of literature and, with the writing objective, does not have room for survey scope; it gives secondary, though an essential, place to the large fields of historical and social background of literature; and for the function of appreciation it is necessarily limited to a comparatively few students with some degree of special aptitude. Courses in literature are indispensable as background to playwriting, but it is also true that, for certain students, a course in playwriting may be a desirable supplement to the literature courses. Admission to playwriting should be selective for those with an intense interest, not a vague notion that it would be pleasant to write a play; and continuance beyond an introductory half-year should be for those who show ability for dramatic writing. Slovenly and half-hearted work would destroy the values of the course. A very much larger number of students than might generally be supposed, however, are capable of becoming intensely interested, doing disciplined work, and achieving self-expression in dramatic writing.

Playwriting, when organized into a course which gives appropriate emphasis to the historical traditions and literature of drama and the severity of its technical requirements, I am inclined to think from the general academic records of my own students, tends to attract superior students and repel the mediocre, dilettantish, and mildly

interested. The result for liberal education, independently of the professional functions, is a group of students capable of mutual stimulation engaged in a study and activity which offers a solid foundation for critical appreciation of drama in all its modes, an integrated discipline of intellect and imagination, and an experience in assimilated orientation.

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AMBIGUITY ABOUT MR. POPE

LODWICK HARTLEY¹

For many years it has always been possible to find somebody who would declare that Alexander Pope, whatever else he might have been, was no poet. The late Professor A. E. Housman gave the frequently accepted notion the brilliance of an epigram when he insisted that to call Pope a poet was a matter of employing "ambiguity of language to promote confusion of thought." The appearance of two distinguished volumes on Pope's art² should justify a re-examination of the poetic canons by which many have denied Pope even the lower ranges of Parnassus.

When in his dictionary Dr. Johnson defined poetry as "metrical composition; the art or practice of writing poems," he undoubtedly felt that, at least as a lexicographer, he had done his best with a difficult word. Though comfortably broad, the definition contained one idea that Dr. Johnson as a critic would gladly have underlined: poetry was the *art* of writing poems. Indeed, eighteenth-century criticism in general was inclined to go considerably farther: poetry was almost a science, with codes of rules by Aristotle and Horace and Boileau. It was no nebulous and haphazard affair, depending on something welling up inside of one. The matter of poetry was removed (at least in theory) from the realm of chance; and clarity

¹ Associate professor of English, North Carolina State College.

² Geoffrey Tillotson, *On the Poetry of Pope* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1938); Robert Kilburn Root, *The Poetical Career of Alexander Pope* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1938).

was palpable evidence of a well-disciplined poetic faculty. Whatever ambiguity of language may be involved in calling much neo-classical verse "poetry," there is rarely any of the same kind of ambiguity *in* the verse itself.

Pope once wrote with excellent good sense: "To judge . . . of *Shakespear* by Aristotle's rules, is like trying a man by the Laws of one country, who acted under those of another." Whereas Shakespeare suffered lack of proper appreciation in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the greatest of the neo-classicists suffered his worst eclipse in the period that brought the idolatrous school of Shakespearean criticism. Although Byron—in many senses the last of the Augustans—was staunch in his defense, Bowles and De Quincey condemned him severely. If we examine the argument, we shall find that Bowles and De Quincey, like most of the later detractors, have done identically what Pope deprecated in the detractors of Shakespeare.

It is very fine to say: "A poem should not *mean* but *be*." However, it is somewhat unfair to feel because a poem happens to *mean* and *be* at the same time that the piece of verse is perhaps not eligible to the classification of poetry at all. Admitting the value of what Baudelaire called "indispensable obscurity," we are under no obligation to put lucidity out of court. Saying that poetry is emotional rather than intellectual is making what is plainly an unwarranted limitation of the field. Moreover, if we are going to deny certain verse-forms a place in the ranks of poetry, we shall surely run into difficulties. If we eliminate satire, for example, what shall we do with Horace and Juvenal and Perseus, who in their own day and since have been held in enough esteem as poets? Pope wrote under a poetic code in which lucidity, intellectual quality, satire, and metrical precision all had very respectable places. No poet was ever more conscious of his position when he was attempting a mid-flight. When he "stoops to moralize his song," he is attempting to fool nobody—least of all himself.

Before we consider the field in which Pope's achievement is unchallenged, let us see whether we can apply to the poet any of the common standards used to judge poetry. If poetry must have emotional quality, Pope's work certainly qualifies. It is ironical that

those who admit emotional quality in Pope usually see too much. Mr. Lytton Strachey, who was by no means a detractor, imagined Pope's satires as resembling "nothing so much as spoonfuls of boiling oil, ladled out by a fiendish monkey at an upstairs window upon such of the passers-by whom the wretch had a grudge against." This kind of judgment has been widely accepted by those who see Pope, through eyes like those of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, as a "wicked wasp of Twickenham."

Then, if we must admit Pope's intensity, what of his spontaneity? He speaks for himself in the "Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot":

As yet a child, nor yet a fool to fame,
I lisped in number, for the numbers came.

Nothing is dearer to the romantic critic than the idea of the poet's writing in spite of himself. Here we have, at least, *spontaneous overflow*. Again, we turn to the "First Satire of the Second Book of Horace":

Not write? but then I think,
And for my soul I cannot sleep a wink.
I nod in company, I wake at night,
Fools rush into my head, and so I write.

Spontaneous overflow of *powerful feelings*! What else? If this kind of analysis should appear ludicrous, I wonder whether it is more ludicrous when it is used in defense of Pope than when it is used against him.

The true poet, we are told, must not lack sensibility. In the course of Pope's century, sensibility had the misfortune of going on a rampage—in poetry, on the stage, in the novel. Pope never became maudlin; but our persistence in looking upon him as a fiendish monkey has caused us to neglect his true sensibility. How many of us remember, for example, that he wrote an essay for Steele's "Guardian" on kindness to animals? If we remember the famous pheasant passage in "Windsor Forest," we may forget the equally sentimental one about the lapwings:

The clam'rous lapwings feel the leaden death:
Oft, as the mounting larks their notes prepare,
They fall, and leave their little lives in air.

The fiendish monkey can appear in a humanitarian role.

The more tender passions are by no means neglected. Dean Root has suggested that if, of all Pope's poems, we had only the "Elegy to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady" and "Eloisa to Abelard," we should doubtless want to call Pope a "forerunner" of the Romantic movement. The "Elegy" is steeped in sentimentality. It caused Dr. Johnson, the last of the century's great classicists, to deliver a ponderous condemnation: "Poetry has not often been worse employed than in dignifying the amorous fury of a raving girl." Besides sentimentality, there are other "romantic" qualities. The opening lines—

What beck'ning ghost, along the moon-light shade
Invites my steps, and points to yonder glade?—

suggest the Graveyard School. The mood of melancholy running through the entire poem is akin to that of Blair and Young and of Dr. Parnell's "Nightpiece on Death." The defense of suicide is another element that is more romantic than classic. "Eloisa to Abelard" is a very fine poem in which Pope handles the beautiful love story with passion and yet with restraint. The defense of love outside the marital bonds might have come from Shelley:

Curse on all laws but those which love has made?
Love, free as air, at sight of human ties,
Spreads his light wings, and in a moment flies.

But its right to be called poetry is not conditioned by the fact that Pope, and not Shelley, wrote it.

Even in the later Pope we may find such a "romantic" note as an interest in ruins. Witness the opening lines of the fifth "Moral Essay":

See the wild waste of all-devouring years!
How Rome her own sad Sepulchre appears,
With nodding arches, broken temples spread!
The very Tombs now vanished like their dead!

One can hardly deny that this is a noble expression of the melancholy brought about by the thought of departed glory.

We have heard much of the observing eye of the true poet. It must be remembered that Pope wrote under a poetic theory that preferred the general to the particular. But let us see what he could

do when he felt disposed to use his powers of observation. We return to the pheasant passage in "Windsor Forest":

Ah! what avails his glossy, varying dyes,
His purple crest, and scarlet-circled eyes,
The vivid green his shining plumes unfold,
His painted wings, and breast that flames with gold?

Here are the colors of an Audubon or a Gould print! One other quotation will show how Pope could do a whole landscape in a couplet—the kind of landscape that would delight an impressionistic painter:

Here in full light the russet plains extend:
There rapt in clouds the blueish hills ascend.

The contrast in blue and brown is striking. Beyond doubt, Pope might have been a respectable descriptive poet if he had so chosen.

Nothing shows better than his borrowings the way in which Pope's poetic craft worked. Often he could take a weak line of an obscure poet and give it striking brilliance. This transmutation of base materials is the gift of every great artist. Even when materials were not base, Pope could heighten their effect. Let us take, for example, the line "Forget thyself to marble" in "Il Penseroso." It is a good line to begin with; but in a poem of many good lines it is not particularly distinguished. It is an infinitely greater line when it is endowed with the passion of *Eloisa*: "I have not yet forgot myself to stone." In Epistle I of the "Essay on Man" occurs the line:

Die of a rose in aromatic pain.

In 1713 Lady Winchilsea had written in "The Spleen":

Now the jonquille o'ercomes the feeble brain,
We faint beneath the Aromatic pain.

Pope succeeded in giving the figure remarkable concentration and intensity, adapting it to a new use as only a great imaginative artist could.

It is not difficult to find in Pope passages that, it seems to me, must be accepted as poetry no matter of what school a critic may chance to be. Mr. Housman admitted the sublimity of the closing lines of Book IV of the "Dunciad" without altering his opinion of Pope as a poet. We may pass over a consideration of this as admitted evidence. Let me select four lines from the "Pastorals,"

where in an atmosphere of artificiality one might least expect true poetry to exist. Handel's beard must have bristled in recognition of poetic values when he read the lines, for he set them to very lovely music:

Where'er you walk, cool gales shall fan the glade;
Trees, where you sit shall crowd into a shade;
Where'er you tread, the blushing flowers shall rise,
And all things flourish where you turn your eyes.

One can hardly find in the floodtide of Elizabethan lyricism a purer poetic strain. Or let us take again from "Windsor Forest" the opening couplet of Pope's tribute to Milton, one of the finest couplets in the language:

The Groves of Eden, vanished now so long,
Live in description, and look green in song.

Or where is there a finer poetic rendition of an idea than the tribute to Aristotle in the "Essay on Criticism"?

The mighty Stagirite first left the shore,
Spread all his sails, and durst the deeps explore:
He steered securely, and discovered far,
Led by the light of the Maeonian Star.

Then there is the couplet descriptive of Belinda, which becomes even more startling in its beauty when taken from its context:

On her white breast a sparkling Cross she wore,
Which Jews might kiss, and Infidels adore.

Even in the "Dunciad," where sensuous poetry might least be expected, we find:

To happy Convents, bosomed deep in vines,
Where slumber Abbots, purple as their wines:
To Isles of Fragrance, lily-silvered vales.

We are almost reminded of Keats's "beaded bubbles winking at the brim" and his "purple-stained mouth." The late Mr. G. K. Chesterton expressed himself eloquently on another magnificent couplet, Pope's summary of man's destiny:

Placed on this isthmus of a middle state,
A Being darkly wise, and rudely great.

It would be a work of supererogation to say more than Mr. Chesterton has already said.

It is a commonplace of scholarship to regard the sonnet as a romantic form which received very little attention in the Augustan age. It may be amazing to those who dislike Pope for his neo-classicism to know, as Dean Root has suggested, that scattered about in Pope's work are verse paragraphs from twelve to sixteen lines that in their lyric and reflective quality seem closely akin to the sonnets of Milton and Wordsworth. The "Lo the Poor Indian" passage happens to contain exactly fourteen lines, and except for its rhyme scheme it fills most of the requirements of a sonnet. In the first book of the "Essay on Man" (ll. 232-45) there is another striking passage of fourteen lines, on the "vast chain of being," which is further evidence that Pope might have done credit to the sonnet.

I suppose that no intelligent critic has ever denied Pope mastery in the narrow field that he marked out for himself, even though too many critics have argued that brilliant couplets are not poetry. But many have complained, as Cowper did, of the "mere mechanic art" into which the couplet may degenerate. Dean Root and Mr. Tillotson have both performed a valuable function in showing Pope's amazing virtuosity within a narrow field. The great variety that he achieves in the couplet should convince anyone that his art is by no means mechanic. He is thoroughly conscious of phonetic quality and pause. His lines are by no means lines in which five syllables are stressed evenly and five are unstressed. His use of light and heavy lines is a performance of consummate skill. He gains variety by making an attempt to see that one of the five accented syllables should be virtually suppressed, although never wholly so. At other times, instead of suppressing a stress, he adds one. It is possible to find lines in Pope with as many as seven heavy syllables. Pope's achievement of great flexibility in the couplet becomes increasingly impressive with his maturity. Whereas his early verse is comparable to Waller's in the percentage of normal lines, as he grows older the percentage of normal lines steadily decreases. If Pope is read correctly, there should be little monotony in his verse.

If I have had a tendency to show the "romantic" qualities in Pope, I have done so not because Pope's right to be called a poet rests on such fragile things but because I have wanted to show the folly of condemning him on his "mere mechanic art." As a matter of fact,

Pope is not to be flattered by having his romantic qualities pointed out. His theory of poetry was different from that of the Romantics, and he practiced what he preached. He believed that a poet should instruct and delight, but he felt that the matter of delighting is secondary. For that reason, ideas were more important to him than images. He prided himself upon quickly getting out of "fancy's maze," the realm of imaginative literature. He believed that a poet should follow Nature—which, as others before me have suggested, had nothing to do with the hills and lakes of Cumberland and Westmoreland but had much to do with what is normal and universal in human nature. If he relies upon "rules," the rules are those of Nature rather than those of Aristotle. Aristotle may be wrong; Nature cannot be. But Pope is far from the belief that anything so mechanical as rules can make a poet. Genius is a prime necessity. Witness how the apostle of correctness condemns critics who base their judgment on mere externals—those critics who

by Numbers judge a poet's song
And smooth or rough, with them is right or wrong.

Even though we should be forced to judge Pope purely on the basis of such external consideration as "numbers," we should have to admit that he is one of the supreme craftsmen of English verse. It is difficult to see how one can deny that in other respects he could snatch a grace beyond the reach of art. After all, the best argument in his favor is his permanence. Undoubtedly, the final word has best been said in a couplet that twists two of the poet's own lines to his service:

Pope springs eternal in the human breast,
What oft was thought but ne'er so well express'd.

ROUND TABLE

WHAT DO STUDENTS READ?

The January *English Journal* (College Edition) contained an article, "Students Read—," which interested me because of inquiries of my own into student reading habits.

Recently I too asked students—ninety-four students majoring in home economics—to name their favorite periodical. These are their selections:

Reader's Digest.....	60	Ladies Home Journal.....	2
Life.....	7	Health.....	1
Time.....	6	Scribner's.....	1
Good Housekeeping.....	6	News Week.....	1
Harper's.....	3	National Geographic.....	1
American Magazine.....	2	Literary Digest.....	1
Fortune.....	2	Home Economics Journal..	1

The *Reader's Digest* and *Time*, as in the article "Students Read—," are at the top of the list.

But what about newspapers and books? Is it a safe generalization to say that books are seldom if ever read, or that newspapers should be left entirely out of the picture, or that magazines are read much more than either books or newspapers by all students? To satisfy myself on those scores I had 130 home-economics students arrange, in order of time spent in reading, the following three items: books, magazines, and newspapers, that which they spent the most of their leisure time reading to be placed first, that which they spent the next most time reading to be placed second, the other, third. Table 1 shows their arrangement.

TABLE 1

Classes of Reading Matter	First	Second	Third
Newspapers.....	60	45	25
Magazines.....	49	59	22
Books.....	22	29	79

In short, sixty spend most of their leisure reading time on newspapers, forty-nine on magazines, and twenty-two on books. Since I stressed the

fact that they were not to include any assigned reading such as textbook reading or book report reading but only their leisure time reading wherein they exercised complete freedom of choice, the results, although not conclusive because of the small number of replies, would at least suggest that books are not utterly neglected and that newspapers receive as much if not more attention than magazines.

But what about the essay—pale or otherwise? Is it truly “out”? And fiction? Is it the “exception rather than the usual”? What about all types of reading matter? Again I asked my students—the same 130. I asked them to arrange in order of time spent in reading, the following five items: fiction, essay, drama, poetry, and biography, just as they did the three items above. Table 2 shows their arrangement.

TABLE 2

Types of Literature	First	Second	Third	Fourth	Fifth
Fiction.....	111	9	5	5	0
Biography.....	7	48	32	28	15
Essay.....	3	29	35	33	30
Poetry.....	4	25	26	35	40
Drama.....	2	20	32	33	43

Do not such additional “straws in the wind” suggest a broader conclusion than that arrived at in the article, “Students Read—,” namely, that students, “when left to their own guidance, display a healthy curiosity about those experiences which give birth to literature” but very little about literature itself, and that teachers, therefore, should leave their ivory towers and their “substitute-for-life” and come down to earth and reality? Students do display healthy curiosity about life—true—but they show also an interest in that literature deriving from life.

Perhaps literature is to some of them at least a supplement to life or an enriching of life rather than a substitute. Or perhaps an ivory tower—symbolic of remoteness from life—is the very vantage point needed from which a student might see all the various bits of life and reality in perspective for the first time. The student reaction to the once-famous “Men from Mars” broadcast was enough to show a need for such perspective. Their literal acceptance of that radio drama as fact might well be the direct and natural result of too much newspaper and magazine reading to the exclusion of imaginative and creative literature.

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A PLEA FOR THE TRADITIONAL

I may say at the start that this paper is frankly reactionary. I run the risk of being called an old fogey, a piece of the dead timber that is blocking the progress of our schools. But some of the articles which have recently appeared in the *English Journal* have disturbed me, not so much by the questions raised as by the answers given.

English teaching, according to most of these discussions, is being called upon to defend its place in the sun. This is fair enough; all teaching, at the present time, is more or less subject to examination and revaluation. Many of the writers, however, seem to me to use an unnecessarily apologetic tone and to go rather far afield in their attempts at justification. They give the impression of desperately trying to keep a place for the English department in college organization, though according to their own admission its original purpose is gone.

English teachers are to give their efforts, apparently, mainly to "orientation courses." These courses, which began modestly as attempts to help the student adjust himself to college life and to the knowledge of the world, seem to have become more complicated and more theoretical. One, called "An Introduction to Literature," investigates the relation of literature to life "in the light of recent psychological, philosophic, and social scholarship." Another, "The International Study of Literature," includes the following divisions: "Problems and Methods of General Literature," "Literature and Society," "The Doctrine of Art for Art's Sake," and "Types of Criticism."

Now, these are all interesting topics. But I would humbly raise the question: How can a student consider intelligently these general aesthetic problems when he knows practically nothing of the field with which they are concerned? What can he know about the relation of literature to society without first acquiring some familiarity with literature?

The modern student seems to be pointed toward a goal quite different from that of Browning's Grammarian, who "decided not to Live but Know." He is expected not to know, but to live. Over and over again we find suggestions that English teaching is to work toward "creative leadership" and "social living." This no doubt is very good as a general aim for all education. But why should the English department alone be given this as its single aim? Why should we surrender all claim to importance in our subject matter?

We do not find the teachers of physics ignoring atoms and electrons in their desire to lead the budding physicists toward the good life. The

chemists use their discoveries, it is true, for the benefit of mankind, but they have a healthy interest in knowledge for its own sake, in what it will tell them about the world. Painters and musicians are not entirely unconscious of the work of earlier artists, though they themselves may make use of techniques that would startle Raphael and Beethoven.

Do we have anything, as a result of centuries of writing, that is worth presenting to our students? Some of our colleagues, evidently, do not think so. They give patronizing dismissal to all those who were unfortunate enough to be born before this present period. Mr. W. F. Gallaway, in an *English Journal* article on "Our Teaching of Literature Outmoded," remarks: "*Beowulf* and *The Faerie Queen*, *Paradise Lost* and *Absalom and Achitophel* have little more than a scholarly interest, for their beauty is enmeshed in forgotten systems of thought and in abandoned modes of life." Assuming that this is true—for it might be objected that the struggle between good and evil imaginatively portrayed in some of this literature is not a completely abandoned mode of life—is such writing entirely without interest? It might possibly be worth while to know something of systems of thought and modes of life which have been important in the development of the world, even though our own ways of thinking and living are far removed from them. Certainly if we are to discard all the literature of the past, the history departments in our universities will be in an even worse situation than the departments of English, for they are necessarily concerned with "forgotten systems of thought and abandoned modes of life."

Literature of an earlier time, according to Mr. Gallaway, is to be condemned if it does not have "punch." Well, some of these productions had considerable "punch" for their own time, and if we have any curiosity, which Matthew Arnold—himself, I suppose, outmoded—considered one element in culture, we may be interested to discover why.

Some English teachers have a nostalgic tone in their desertion of the past. They admit that they still think Wordsworth a greater poet than Frost and prefer Hardy to Hemingway and Faulkner. But in dismal chorus they insist that it is impossible to make undergraduates like or even tolerate writers of a past generation.

In the face of such defeatism I should like to utter a word of cheer. For a good many years now I have given a course in Chaucer, and in all that time I have never had a class—I could almost say an individual—who did not like him. In a course covering only one term of about twelve weeks, we naturally cannot go very far into scholarly problems of language and sources. Our aim is to get some general impression of Chaucer's pe-

riod and his relation to it, appreciation of his humor, his narrative skill and his power of characterization, and—so far as modern guesswork can attain it—the rhythm of his poetry. Necessarily, we travel with speed; we do *Troilus and Criseyde* at the rate of half a book a day. Perhaps it is testimony to “universal appeal,” perhaps only a sign of innate frivolity, that we appreciate Chaucer’s version and still chuckle delightedly over Mr. Morley’s clever paraphrase in *The Trojan Horse*.

In reading novels, too, my students are either more docile or more conventional than those whose instructors are in such despair. Most of them enjoy Dickens; many even find something interesting in Richardson and Fielding when exposed to them. In fact, it seems to me that the average undergraduate student is better fitted to read and understand the older novels than the very recent ones, which demand a background of psychological and scientific knowledge.

The English teachers who write articles seem to cling to the maxim which I have always thought the especial property of schools of education: that we should lead the students from what they know to what they don’t know. But I wonder if, after all, it is particularly efficient to be always walking backward. Just the other day, the doctors were puzzling over a man who was doing this in an actual physical sense, and he was regarded as a pathological case. Perhaps, speaking symbolically, it might be as well to take an airplane to the place where we want to start, and then proceed in the normal manner.

Even those who admit some value in acquaintance with earlier literature assume that we must constantly be relating it to our own time. We should “point out that Tennyson’s or Arnold’s difficulty in reconciling science with religion is today paralleled in the experience of our most thoughtful young folk.” Surely any intelligent student reading *In Memoriam* will see its relation to his own problems if he has any. The main thing is to get him to know that *In Memoriam* exists.

We are told that our students “will be inclined to approve the greater intellectual honesty of twentieth-century literature.” What about Swift’s scathing satires on human nature and social organizations? Was Milton without intellectual honesty—to say nothing of daring? Some passages from his *Areopagitica* could find a place in our more liberal periodicals today.

I am not for a moment claiming a monopoly of value for the things of the past. I look with a rather pitying amusement at ultra-conservative colleges which close their libraries and their classrooms to anything later than the nineteenth century. The third quarter of my novel course is

strictly contemporary, and does not even refuse consideration to "best sellers," if there seems reasonable ground for including them. But it seems to me there is a happy medium between ignoring the present and forgetting the past.

In the face of the various suggestions for galvanizing moribund English departments into life, I venture to defend another aim—one which, though difficult, is not impossible of attainment: to give the English student a reasonably comprehensive knowledge of the literature that has been written in the English language. Though it would seem that this might be taken for granted, it sounds, after reading the recent pessimistic comments, almost radical.

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DOES "CONCORD BASED ON MEANING" JUSTIFY
"THEIR" REFERRING TO "EACH" OR
"EVERYBODY"?

In the October issue of *College English* there appeared an article which sought to justify the use of the pronoun "their" in reference to singular words such as "each" and "everybody" by insisting that it is a clear tendency of the English language to base agreement in number on meaning rather than on form. This is indeed the common-sense tendency of English, well illustrated by the fact that collective nouns may take either plural or singular verbs. But it is not so clear that the tendency has a great deal to do with the subject discussed in the article.

The argument of the writer seems to be that since the thought of the sentence "Everybody is doing his duty" is practically the same as that of "All are doing their duty," it is a natural tendency—one that ought not to be resisted—to put it, "Everybody is doing *their* duty." But if the fact that "everybody" is the equivalent of "all" calls for and justifies the plural pronoun "their," it would seem that the same fact calls for and justifies the plural verb "are." Yet surely no one would contend that it is good English to say, "Everybody are doing their duty."

No, the truth is that the chief reason for the tendency to use "their" in reference to words like "everybody" is that "their" is clearly either masculine or feminine, or both, while "his" seems to be exclusively masculine. I say "seems to be," for it is really well established in English

that "his" may mean "his or her" when the context calls for such a meaning. Usage abundantly justifies such an interpretation, the grammarians and lexicographers support it, and even the law courts have upheld it. Why, then, should we cling to the illogical "their"? It is undeniably true that some good writers have used it in the past, and it is certainly not a sign of illiteracy when it occurs in ordinary conversation. Careless writers may still employ it on occasion, but for every use of "their" in reference to one of these singular pronouns, it would be easy to find twenty for "his" in present-day written English. Why should we choose the less common and less reasonable usage?

Let us examine some of the recent examples of the use of a plural pronoun to refer to "each" which the author quotes in his article. Here is one from Galsworthy: "Each of the ladies held fans in their hands." What Mr. Galsworthy means is obviously that each of the ladies held a fan in her hand. Why should he not have said so? Does any reader think that the way he expressed it is the better way, or even as good a way as the other? And from Robert Bridges we have: "Each in their turn content to keep the hive clean." Why not "each in his turn"? Would it not have been much better? And now look at the last of these, dated 1937 and taken from the review of a book in the *New York Times*: "... each of the three potential people's choices—Roosevelt, Landon, and Lemke—declared themselves against it." This seems to say that Roosevelt declared that he and Landon and Lemke were against it, and that Landon declared that all three were opposed to it, and that Lemke did likewise. But what it really means, no doubt, is that each of the three declared *himself* against it, and it would have been much better if it had said so. There is not a quotation in the entire list presented that would not have sounded better to a present-day reader of any sensitivity, if the plural pronoun referring to "each" had been replaced by one in the singular.

The writer of the article confuses the issue by including "none" and "any" with clearly singular pronouns like "each" and "everybody." He quotes with approval the following statement:

It is generally held that an indefinite pronoun like *everybody* or *none* must always be singular. Many modern writers insist, however, that when the meaning of *any*, *every*, or *none* is logically plural, the pronoun may be considered plural and that when such a word is referred to by another pronoun, the second pronoun may be plural.

Now, the only people who hold that "none" or "any" must always be singular are those who do not know English usage. We can say "any boy"

or "any boys," and consequently "any" by itself may, and does sometimes, mean "any ones." "None" has been used for more than a thousand years in the plural sense of "not any." But it should be noted that when "none" and "any" are plural, they require plural verbs. ("Are any of the boys here?" "No, none of them *are* here.") When "every" comes to be followed by a plural verb, it may be considered logically plural, but I fear that that time is far in the distance. Until then, I trust that every teacher of English will find it in his heart to help our language in its effort to rid itself of an illogical usage. Or shall I say "that every teacher of English will find it in *their* hearts to cling to an unreasonable usage that was never universal and is now definitely on the decline"? Let every reader take his (or their) choice!

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CURRENT ENGLISH FORUM

"We hear a great deal these days about changes taking place in English usage. What are some of the rapid shifts now in progress? Are these changes faster in pronunciation, in inflection and syntax, or in punctuation? Why?"

J. O. T.

Of course, language undergoes changes all the time; like any other organism, it is not static. However, many of the so-called "changes" in English usage which are the subject of comment at present are often not changes at all. In many instances we are merely recording facts about the English language which have hitherto escaped recognition.

There are a number of reasons for this rather curious situation. For many years the textbooks of rhetoric and handbooks of composition were filled with rules which did not accurately reflect the practices of the English language. New textbooks copied their rules from the old, rather than examining the language itself. Moreover, within the last fifty years, the fact-finding technique of English language scholarship has been markedly improved. Our dictionaries are compiled with greater accuracy; scholarly grammars of the language have been written. The excellence of this scholarly activity is reflected in the more recent textbooks, and in them many common usages are brought into prominence by the sanction which is given them.

The admission that *none* with a plural verb is the common form is a case in point. Condemned in the handbooks for years, it was, nevertheless, in general use from the earliest period of our language. Its sanction in some of the newer and more accurate textbooks is not at all an evidence of recent change—it is merely a neglected truth coming to light.

It is difficult to say where, at any one period, language changes occur most rapidly. Changes in pronunciation may affect the inflectional system, and changes in inflection are inevitably tied up with syntax. The wide dissemination of printing and the decline of illiteracy have undoubtedly had a stabilizing effect upon the English language. Punctuation, although, strictly speaking, an aspect of *writing* rather than of *language*, has perhaps been altered the most profoundly in the last three hundred years.

"I would be interested in learning your opinion about such devices for increasing one's vocabulary as keeping a notebook in which new words are to be listed, and using every new word three times soon after learning its meaning."

C. K. J.

Keeping a notebook or card file in which you list new words with their meanings (and you should be careful to include also the essential information about pronunciation and spelling) is an excellent practice if it is consistently followed. The difficulty with most students of the language is that they do not persist in the plan long enough for it to have any appreciable effect.

"Use a word three times and it is yours" is more questionable as a practical plan of procedure. The difficulty here lies in the fact that we can't always manufacture the situations in which our newly acquired words are to be used. We find ourselves often in the position of Leora in Sinclair Lewis' *Arrowsmith*, who, after having spent an afternoon reading about modern painting, that she might impress her husband's associates, found herself unable to maneuver the evening's conversation in that direction. Suppose we do discover for ourselves the words *atavistic*, *ontology*, and *recrudesce*. Finding even one normal conversational situation in which any of these could be used will not prove an easy matter; three situations, so that the word might be "ours," would require patent manufacture.

The truth is that we cannot put on words like so many articles of clothing. Only as we grow in experience, as our thoughts grow in complexity, do we acquire and employ new words to express this mental growth and development.

NEWS AND NOTES

THE PERIODICALS

Sigmund Freud's death, which occurred at the outbreak of the new European war, recalls his famous interpretation of the psychological factors operative in the World War of 1914-18. Freud believes that civilization has laid on mankind an increasingly complex burden of adaptation and transformation and that mankind has become increasingly incapable of sustaining this burden. The war was primarily a headlong regression to a more tolerable, because more simple, level of psychic life. Mankind at war was mankind showing its inability to discharge the obligations which it had to accept.

Bernard DeVoto speaks of this judgment in his evaluation of Freud's influence on literature, in the *Saturday Review of Literature* for October 7. Few scientists, DeVoto holds, have had so immediate an effect on the thought of their time, and probably no other scientist has ever had so long and so widespread an influence on literature. Long before Freud died, the basic principles of his work had become part of the common intellectual property of mankind. Throughout the last half of the nineteenth century fiction grew steadily more subjective until, with Dostoevski and Henry James, it reached a field which intersected the one which Freud was to explore. Freud gave to fiction in his elaboration of the stream-of-consciousness theory a new way of probing experience and new narrative methods.

Although psychoanalytical fiction as a literary fashion is already on the wane and although Freudian instruments are only one kind of tool for the novelist, the basis in motive of individual behavior is essential to both fiction and psychoanalysis. Freud gave poets a new way of reporting experience; and, when the "unintelligible" modern poetry failed to get a hearing, it was because the poets applied Freud at second hand as psychoanalysis instead of reporting the unconscious at first hand as poetry.

In the departments of literature other than the imaginative Freud's influence has been immeasurable. His basic ideas have worked into education, the law, economics, history, sociology, criminology, and all other studies of society and the individual.

"There is a noble and tragic poetry," concludes DeVoto, "in his vision of man's journey deathward from childhood, beset by terrors whose shape

and import are disguised from him, striving to discipline a primitive inheritance of delusion and rebellion into a livable accord with reality, striving to establish mastery over disruptive instincts, striving to achieve a social adaptation of anarchic drives. It is an exalted vision—and a stern one, since it sets up the sense of reality as the highest criterion.”

In another article in the same issue of the *Saturday Review of Literature* Leonard Bacon speculates upon the reason for the public apathy to poetry. While a generation ago the books of both English and American poets were eagerly read by multitudes, and even the casual experiments in verse by such novelists as Thackeray, George Meredith, George Eliot, and Emily Brontë were popular, today the mention of Dante or Shakespeare produces a look of boredom and diminished expectancy and the more brutal audibly lament that the party is growing highbrow.

One of the causes may be found in the tendency of Americans to worship all things European. Particularly in the period beginning about 1890 Americans began to disparage their own writers (overlooking the fact that many of the great minds of Europe held American writers in high esteem) and to laud the second-rate writers who, for lack of substance, emphasized form. The result has been that many contemporary poets have reacted with violence against the spurious forms popular in an earlier period and have become aloof and chaotic. Imagism and spectrism and movements so complex and recondite that no highbrow could make head or tail of them have caused the average intelligent reader to assume that poetry, the most human of the arts, concerned for its very life with what men are and feel, is in a class with abstruse sciences and chill philosophies. The public believes, with some justice, that contemporary poets are “attitudinizing little mice chased to and fro by catspaws of unimportant doctrine, whose behavior and performance are on the whole about equally negligible.”

The reading of poetry requires solitude and individuality, and our time is characterized by a spirit of regimentation that wants us to fit a pattern and to do things in herds. We might enjoy our loneliness if the spirit of our time had not made us afraid of it. “Our landscape will deliver us,” Mr. Bacon thinks, “and our cities may too when we discover that to mingle with the multitude is no escape from the difficulties of the individual. One doesn’t have to be Keats to hear mighty workings.”

A second world war, following so shortly after the first as to be within the memory of many people now living, has revived discussion of the human-interest phases of the earlier tragedy—what women wore in 1914,

battlefields of the last war, 1914 diplomatic plots. Now Burton Rascoe, in the *Saturday Review of Literature*, for September 23, gives us "What They Read during the Last War."

Although in 1914 Dr. Clifford Smyth and the *New York Times Book Review* may have wanted to continue to stress William Morris, Matthew Arnold, and Victorian criticism, America's literature and literary tastes were growing up. Books by Mary Austin, Edna Ferber, Dorothy Canfield, Theodore Dreiser, Sinclair Lewis, and Booth Tarkington were being advertised. Samuel Butler, Henrik Ibsen, G. B. Shaw, and H. G. Wells had upset the literary and intellectual G.A.R. composed of William Dean Howells, W. C. Brownell, Henry Mills Alden, etc. In Chicago Harriet Monroe, with Vachel Lindsay and Carl Sandburg as contributors, was running a monthly called *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse*. Translations of Russian novels were meeting with praise.

When Sir Gilbert Parker and his subordinates met at Wellington House in August, 1914, they found that their campaign against American neutrality was going to be quite simple. With James Bryce, Chesterton, Belloc, Barrie, Masfield, and Galsworthy as writers and lecturers, Wellington House bombarded America with propaganda. Books on German barbarism were good incendiary to arouse patriotic fervor at home, as well as across the water. However, this outside war influence had little effect on the romantic, imaginative trend of American literature. Even after we entered the war, our novels seemed to treat the gay, light-hearted, and adventurous side of the conflict, and it was not until the completion of the war that realistic treatment was offered.

Chicago was the literary center of America, with William Vaughn Moody, Robert Herrick, and Robert Morss Lovett on the staff of the University of Chicago, and Stephen Crane, Frank Norris, Hamlin Garland, Willa Cather, Edgar Lee Masters, and Ben Hecht under the wing of Harriet Monroe.

In the East the first issue of the *New Republic* appeared on November 7, 1914. It soon carried such notable literary material as Theodore Dreiser's article on W. Somerset Maugham's *Of Human Bondage* and H. G. Wells's review of James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*.

The Irish literary renaissance had preceded the war, and the works of Yeats, Synge, and Dunsany had already been taken to the hearts of American readers. But Joseph Conrad, Galsworthy, Wells, Barrie, Shaw, Barbusse, and Walpole published much of value during the war years.

Thus, while war poems and novels were popular, the books of the war period which have been generally considered permanent additions to literature had little or nothing to do with the war.

Although prepared for publication before Mr. Howard's sudden death, Edith J. R. Isaacs' article, "Sidney Howard," in the October issue of *Theatre Arts Monthly*, reviewing his career and speaking of the future was sent to press in its original form.

Mr. Howard was an excellent critic, one who could recognize his own limitations as well as another's. To him the actor was the thing; the playwright merely selected and arranged material, and the actor projected characters, situations, and ideas across the footlights. He never considered himself a great playwright and ranked playwriting as a form distinctly second to that of the novel. He called the dramatist "a vicarious actor."

The drama does not spring from a literary impulse but from a love of the brave, ephemeral, beautiful art of acting. When such a love becomes the obsession of genius, then great plays are written and great dramatists appear, as Ibsen, Shakespeare, and Chekhov appeared.

Yet, despite the limits Sidney Howard places on his plays, he has written more successful plays which have enjoyed long runs and offered fine parts for actors than has almost any other active, living playwright. His close contact with the world around him, with the problems of people of every class, permitted him to write with eagerness and vitality.

Through his long list of plays run failures as well as successes. In all there are "live stories, believable characters, good dialogue, theatrical situations. In the unsuccessful ones the proportions seem to be wrong; in the successful ones they are right, that is the major difference." Some of his "hits" were: *Ned McCobb's Daughter*, *The Silver Cord*, and *They Knew What They Wanted*.

Widely hailed as a playwright, Howard was also recognized as an excellent adapter. *Christopher Bean*, *Dodsworth*, and *Yellow Jack*, all adaptations, are among his outstanding successes.

"His stories, even in the original plays, seem not so much to have been re-created within him as an artist's tales usually are, as to have been ingeniously filtered out of the news or out of the air around him. That may be one reason why they are never great stories; that may be one reason why he can throw himself so whole-heartedly and to such good purpose into the world of adapting and dramatizing other men's tales. . . and that makes both actors and audience await always with attention the presentation of any new work signed by Sidney Howard's pen."

The reading of *The Complete Collected Poems (1906-1938)* of William Carlos Williams prompted Ruth Lechlitner, in the September issue of *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse*, to trace the career and forecast the future

of this American poet. Influenced, at first, by the Imagists, his style was marked by the conventional verse patterns; his subjects abounded in romanticism and sentimentality. Soon his characteristic free-verse style (*Transitional Poems*)—short, sharp lines—asserted itself. Then, in 1917, with the renaissance of realism, Williams discovered the vast possibilities for social comment afforded by the commonplace objects of the American scene. He voiced his objection to ostentation. He began to draw characters. With the direction he was to follow now determined, he perfected his structural technique. Conveying the feeling of tension, of primitive, primary color, of cold, sharp edges delighted him.

Recently Williams has been interested in objectivism—"the desire for what is objectively perfect." He practices the art of making comment and object inseparable—of stopping just short of pointing meanings.

Up to this time Williams has been contented with isolated perceptions. However, *The Crimson Cyclamen* shows a new tendency—a tendency to merge all separatenesses into a perfect whole. Here, then, is his new star. "Would it not be possible for him to achieve a fusion or cohesion of those factual, though disassociated and separately represented facets of the American social scene into something completely observed?"

The growth of library science, aided by mechanical developments and developments in communication, has placed at the door of American students of European culture comparatively inexpensive, yet completely reliable, sources of information. R. D. Jameson describes, in the August 26 issue of the *Saturday Review of Literature*, new methods put into service through the far-reaching efforts of Dr. Herbert Putnam, librarian emeritus of the Library of Congress.

Particularly outstanding among the mechanical developments are photostatics and microphotography. Photostating makes possible, at a cost of twenty cents a sheet to cover printing and postage, the reproduction of maps, medieval manuscripts, and pages from old books. This process, which is really a photograph taken directly on a sheet of sensitized paper, eliminates all possibility of error and allows the scholar greater opportunity to meditate within the confines of his own study at his own convenience.

Microphotography, a more recent mechanical achievement, opens still more startling vistas to the stay-at-home scholar. Apparatus has been devised to photograph books rapidly and sharply, and in so doing to reduce them in size from, say, 9 by 11 inches to 1 by 1 inch, with a comparable reduction in weight. The most efficient type of projection apparatus is a large box, the front of which is a piece of glass 14 by 18 inches on

which the image, increased by ten to twenty-five diameters, can be thrown. By means of a crank device, one can "leaf" the pages of the book. The cost of reproducing a two-hundred-page book would range from two to four dollars, while the projection apparatus would amount to the price of a standard typewriter. Compared with the cost of scientific volumes, now out of print, or with the expense of a trip to European libraries, the amount is negligible.

Library science further assists the student, by means of the Union Catalog of the Library of Congress, to discover what resources for the study of any subject are to be found in more than seven hundred American libraries. There is also a duplicate catalogue of the British Museum. Catalogue cards on any subject may be photostated and mailed, along with needed books, to the home of the researcher.

Thus, new methods, which make books usable, permit the scholar to derive full value from former "shelf-adorners."

THE BEST SELLERS¹

FICTION

1. *The Grapes of Wrath*, by John Steinbeck. Viking.
2. *Escape*, by Ethel Vance. Little.
3. *Children of God*, by Vardis Fisher. Harper.

NONFICTION

1. *Country Lawyer*, by Bellamy Partridge. Whittlesey.
2. *Inside Asia*, by John Gunther. Harper.
3. *Days of Our Years*, by Pierre van Paassen. Hillman.

CANDIDATES FOR THE BEST SELLER LIST

FICTION

1. *Christmas Holiday*, by W. Somerset Maugham. Doubleday.
2. *It Takes All Kinds*, by Louis Bromfield. Harper.
3. *The Nazarene*, by Sholem Asch. Putnam.

NONFICTION

1. *After Seven Years*, by Raymond Moley. Harper.
2. *Thoreau*, by Henry Seidel Canby. Houghton.
3. *The Defence of Britain*, by B. H. Liddell Hart. Random.

¹ As reported by the *Publishers' Weekly* on November 4, based upon reports of retail bookstores' sales during the preceding week.

BOOKS

THE IMPROVEMENT OF READING

Dr. Strang's new book¹ is without doubt the most comprehensive and thorough treatment of reading in high school and college now available. The ten chapters provide an authoritative discussion of evidences of reading problems, abilities involved in reading, vocabulary problems, developmental reading, remedial reading, methods of appraising reading ability, case studies, reading materials, reading tests, and procedures for improving comprehension. There is an appendix in which detailed information on high-school and college reading tests is reported.

An admirable feature of the book is that it is built on a sound basis of research and yet avoids dealing with the minutia and trivia of research. It includes a synthesis and interpretation of nearly all the more important studies of reading in high school and college and at the same time provides a unified treatment of principles of reading instruction.

Special mention should be made of the fact that the book contains a valuable chapter on the school-wide developmental program in reading, as well as one on remedial reading. Thus far, the teaching of reading in the secondary school and college has been concerned almost exclusively with remedial or corrective reading, notwithstanding the fact that the developmental aspects are perhaps more important. Dr. Strang's provision of a needed emphasis on developmental reading is to be commended.

The book contains the most extensive list of carefully selected reading materials for use in high school and college that has come to the attention of this reviewer. It would seem that this chapter alone would make the book almost indispensable to teachers of reading from the junior high school upward.

The chapter on case studies is perhaps the least effective part of the book. This is due largely to the fact that, outside the work of two or three persons, there is a dearth of carefully planned, scientific, long-time case studies of pupils with reading difficulties.

Some teachers may be disappointed by the fact that the book gives

¹ Ruth Strang (with the assistance of Florence C. Rose), *Problems in the Improvement of Reading in High School and College*. New York: The Author, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1938.

very little attention to the recent mechanical devices for aiding the teaching of reading. It would seem, however, that in view of the experimental nature of nearly all such devices at present, the author has exercised commendable caution in assigning them a minor place in a book that may influence the practices of secondary-school and college teachers of reading.

This book should serve as a stimulating and informative text in courses on the teaching of reading and as an invaluable source book and guide for all those who are trying to help adolescent boys and girls grow in reading skill and power.

ARTHUR E. TRAXLER

EDUCATIONAL RECORDS BUREAU
NEW YORK CITY

IN THE MAIN STREAM

I hope Donald Davidson will not be angry when I call *American Composition and Rhetoric*¹ a conservative textbook. What with tear-out books, alphabetical indexes to Freshman composition, and the protocols of I. A. Richards, these must be the times that try publishers' souls. Professor Davidson's book is, if not a return, an adherence to the traditional methods of teaching Freshman English. Frankly and unashamedly a rhetoric, it is in the main stream of college composition and one of the trimmest craft to ply those sluggish waters.

This book is written on the assumption that the study of composition and rhetoric is valuable in itself, over and above its obvious instrumental uses, and that, if it were not thus valuable, it would not now be a universal requirement in American institutions of higher learning.

Professor Davidson believes that the principles of composition and rhetoric possess "genuine sovereignty," and in discussing them he acknowledges his debt to Melvin Curl's *Expository Writing*, Robert M. Gay's *Reading and Writing*, and John Crowe Ransom's *Topics for Freshman Composition*. In short, an English department can transfer officers, crew, and passengers to this paint-new steamer and find in it the same machinery, appointments, fittings, from anchor chain to rudder, that they had rubbed to the grain in the older boat.

Machinery, appointments, fittings: Promenading from forward to aft, we find "The Study of Composition and Rhetoric," "The Composition," "Simple Expository Writing" (process, mechanisms and organizations, people, ideas, the short critical review), "The Paragraph," "The Sen-

¹ Charles Scribner's Sons. Pp. 695. \$2.00.

tence," "Words," "Descriptive and Narrative Writing," "Further Problems of Expository Writing," "The Article of Opinion," "A Concise Handbook of Grammar," "Punctuation," and "Common Errors." "Further Problems," by way of example, contains definition, analysis, the research paper, the critical essay, the informal essay.

The machinery is old, inevitable, and immutable, but the decorations are new and distinctively American. As the author points out, the book contains rather more examples of good writing than is common. They are almost all modern, except for Thoreau, who ought to be in every such textbook; and nearly all are American. Representative authors are Charles and Mary Beard, J. T. Adams, Ernest Hemingway, John Crowe Ransom. One of the most interesting selections is Professor Davidson's own "Brother Jonathan and Cousin Roderick." The only possible source of dissatisfaction with the author's choice is the prevailing southern accent of the selections. Nonsouthern users, if they want any regional material, will prefer that it be taken from their own region.

This will be a comfortable textbook for the instructor and an interesting book for the interested student. The student who cannot tell an unproved assumption from an Oxford dictionary will know that at least he has studied a rhetoric which is as clear, concise, and entertaining as an English professor of originality and power can make it.

HERBERT ELLSWORTH CHILDS

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A WORDSWORTH AND COLERIDGE MISCELLANY¹

This volume well illustrates the varieties of research now being done by leading authorities on Wordsworth and on Coleridge. Each of the contributions in one way or another bears the earmarks of thorough scholarship, acquaintance with what has been done in the same field, a sense of what still needs to be done and how it may be done, patience in analysis, cautiousness in inference, and clarity of exposition. It is the product of specialists, but the product is nevertheless of much value to the college teacher of the romantic movement.

Some of the generally useful new information is biographical. Ernest de Selincourt, famed for his skill in discovering and interpreting firsthand documents, in *Wordsworth and His Daughter's Marriage* corrects the impression that the aged poet was purely selfish in his reluctance to assent

¹ Earl Leslie Griggs (ed.), *Wordsworth and Coleridge: Studies in Honor of George McLean Harper*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1939. \$4.00.

to Dora's marriage with Quillinan and makes it clear that any affectionate father not bereft of prudence would have hesitated to sanction the union. The life and the personality of Coleridge are shown in a pleasanter light than usual in two accounts, from contemporaneous sources, of his tour in Germany in 1799 and of his surprising feats as a mountain-climber in the Lake Country in 1799-1802. The evidence for these interpretations has not hitherto been available; and the articles should be read by anyone who supposes that the real characteristics of Wordsworth and of Coleridge are too well known to need further elucidation.

Even more important to him who wishes to keep his teaching abreast of the latest discoveries are the articles by Emile Legouis, Oscar J. Campbell, Newton P. Stallknecht, B. R. McElderry, Jr., and Earl Leslie Griggs on various aspects of the composition, purpose, and meaning of the poets' works. In the new light which these studies cast much of the usual classroom exposition of those works will appear superficial or erroneous. Sounder interpretations may, in that light, be made of such poems as *The Lyrical Ballads*, *The Prelude*, *The Excursion*, *The Ode to Duty*, *The River Duddon*, *The White Doe of Rylstone*, *The Ancient Mariner*, and *Christabel*. Particularly noteworthy contributions are Raymond D. Havens' explanation of precisely what values Wordsworth sought in solitude, silence, and loneliness; and Clarence DeWitt Thorpe's analysis of the differences which Coleridge discovered between the merely beautiful and the truly sublime. Such widely useful studies show the fatuousness of sneering at all research as "more and more about less and less."

ERNEST BERNBAUM

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

IN BRIEF REVIEW

[Mention under this head does not preclude review elsewhere.]

FOR THE GENERAL READER

Tommy Gallagher's Crusade. By James T. Farrell. Vanguard. \$1.00.

In *Tommy Gallagher* the author of *Studs Lonigan* has created an ominous character. The story is short, only ninety pages, but it is illuminating. Tommy is the son of respectable, hard-working parents, whose older sons follow the family pattern. But Tommy, who never holds the jobs his family finds for him, sells the political weekly of Father So and So on street corners, carries banners with anti-Semitic threats, and loudly shouts the slogans of his gang. Farrell shows his usual skill in depicting not only the actions but the spiritual values and mental processes of his characters.

Escape. By Ethel Vance. Little, Brown. \$2.50.

This intensely interesting story opens with Emmy Ritter, a formerly beloved actress, an American-born widow of a German, ill in a concentration camp and condemned to death. Her American son has arrived and pleads for her release. The reader may fear that this is another horror story, but the author is wholly concerned with the loss of spiritual values under the present fascist regime. People of all classes—the great general, the doctor, the trusted servant, and his family—are victims of a “funny smoked-black image of a God out of the past,” and yet a glimmer of something noble remains.

Broad Is the Way. By Emerson Waldman. Farrar. \$2.50.

Critics were enthusiastic about Waldman's first novel, *The Land Is Large*, in which David Gabrielson, a good man, fled from oppressions in Russia and established a home in Mississippi. David's oldest son is grown now and his greed and fierce ambition are the more shocking because of the family's past experiences, of which he has vague memories. The analysis of this man's rise to power is an excellent character study.

Four-Part Setting. By Ann Bridge. Little, Brown. \$2.50.

Ann Bridge (pseudonym for the wife of an English diplomat) has her own following which she has delighted in *Peking Picnic*, *Enchanter's Nightshade*, etc. This new novel has English characters, a Chinese setting; time, the present. The author is a keen student of people and retains her faith in many things. The story has a moral—maybe two or three.

Strife before Dawn. By Mary Schumann. Dial Press. \$2.50.

Mary Schumann, as a descendant of pioneers, has been thrilled by the family stories of frontier life; she vouches for the authenticity of her characters and the accuracy of her history. The time is 1764-82, and the background, the occupation of Pennsylvania and the struggle with the Indians for the Northwest Territory. The heroic part played by the wives of the settlers and the wholesome unsentimental sympathy the author feels for the Indian whose land is stolen from him give tone to this excellent story.

Another Cynthia. By Doris Leslie. Macmillan. \$2.50.

Cynthia Bright, of unknown parentage, baptized in 1780 as the adopted daughter of an innkeeper, became a toast and beauty of London. John Kemble gave her a small part in a production at Bath, and her rise was rapid. Dickens was her friend, as were Sarah Siddons and Lord Byron, and she became the mistress of the Duke of Clarence. The fictionized story of her life reads like an unpleasant fairy tale, made more interesting because of the glimpses of famous persons and places.

Again the River. By Stella Morgan. Crowell. \$2.50.

This is a river drama, a story of floods, of people who owned the land and moved out—if they could—when a flood came, and moved back when the water receded. It has been given publicity by Mrs. Roosevelt, who called it “one of the most stirring books I have read in a long time.” It is, in spite of the reality of the flood tragedies, sentimental. With little education and an illiterate and shabby background, the children of the faithful Jasper Morton made remarkable advances socially and culturally!

A Great Day. By Elizabeth Seifert. Dodd, Mead. \$2.50.

The author of *Young Doctor Galahad* has written a challenging story of the sale of drugs and patent medicines to a gullible public. Optimistic, idealistic young doctors and chemists and how they lose their ideals, fathers who love and thwart their children, add interest to her tale.

Queen Anne Boleyn. By Francis Hackett. Doubleday. \$2.75.

The author of *Henry the Eighth* has written a fascinating historical novel with Anne Boleyn as heroine. A quaint picture of Anne's baby daughter—the future Elizabeth—is drawn in a few words. The history of the period is presented in an intensive and dramatic manner. The author's rich choice of words and phrasing adds greatly to the charm of the lengthy book.

Drums at Dusk. By Arna Bontemps. Macmillan. \$2.50.

An American negro poet-novelist writes a vivid story of Haiti and a negro insurrection, with echoes of the French Revolution.

Pilgrim's Progress. By John Bunyan. Retold by Mary Godolphin. Stokes. \$2.00.

The text has been retold and shortened by Mary Godolphin. It is beautifully illustrated by Robert Lawson, illustrator of *Ferdinand*. Naturally, the book loses a great deal in its shortening and simplification, but we venture to say many adults will revive their memories by reading this version told in one-fifth of the original length but retaining all important characters and episodes; children are enthusiastic about the book. The map and illustrations are admirable.

The Tree of Liberty. By Elizabeth Page. Farrar. \$3.00.

This first novel, published last spring, continues a high favorite and will no doubt head many a Christmas list. The time is 1754-1805; the hero, frontiersman Matthew Howard, who believes that democracy is and must be based upon the individual's right to security. He marries a girl of wealth and position, to whom success and the niceties of life mean a great deal. Their love is endangered by traditional conflicts, just as democracy of their day was threatened by developing problems.

The Woman in the Hall. By G. B. Stern. Macmillan. \$2.50.

This very unusual and subtle character has been developed with much skill. Lorna Blake is seemingly a demure little widow with two children; her acquaintance holds thrills for any jaded reader.

The City of Gold: Johannesburg. By Francis Brett Young. Reynal. \$2.75.

In that excellent book, *They Seek a Country*, Young told the story of the settlement of Dutch Africa and the heroic struggle of the Boers. Now the farmer-colonists have prospered; the Kaffir wars are ended and peace reigns in a measure. Suddenly diamonds and gold are discovered, and the English and Boers become hostile to each other. Full of adventure but slower in movement and very detailed, the book is less readable than *They Seek a Country* and *White Ladies*.

All in the Day's Work. By Ida M. Tarbell. Macmillan. \$3.50.

Completed in her eightieth year, this account of a rich life, covering a period of vital interest to us at the present, is an excellent and illuminating story of a gracious woman of unusual perception.

Thoreau. By Henry Seidel Canby. Houghton Mifflin. \$3.75.

Thoreau's importance and an interest in his philosophy have been steadily increasing both here and abroad in the past few years. Dr. Canby gives a new interpretation of the great emotionalist who rebelled against materialism. He believes "his [Thoreau's] most important contribution to our thinking is a ringing definition of the values which the individual must, and can, preserve even against the pressure of a mechanized society or totalitarian state." Dr. Canby has gone to great pains to discover feminine influences in Thoreau's life. These deductions from small talk, rumors, and fragmentary letters do not seem very convincing or important.

From Another World: The Autobiography of Louis Untermeyer. Harcourt, Brace. \$3.00.

Here are vivid reminiscences of Vachel Lindsay, Amy Lowell, Mencken, Sara Teasdale, John Reed, Robert Frost, Rockwell Kent, Elinor Wylie, D. H. Lawrence, Isadora Duncan, and others. As one of the founders of *The Masses*, *The Seven Arts*, *The Liberator*, and *The Miscellany of American Poetry*, Untermeyer speaks with authority. He has lived abundantly, has a capacity for friendship and a passion for detail that is sometimes a bit cruel, a keen interest in people, and an immense faith in himself. His story is informative and readable.

Autobiography. By A. A. Milne. Dutton. \$3.00.

The author of *When We Were Very Young* has written in gay and optimistic vein a delightful story of his own life.

Files on Parade. By John O'Hara. Harcourt, Brace. \$2.50.

The author of *Appointment in Samarra* and *Butterfield 8* enjoys the conciseness, the swift pace of the short story, and makes a study of types and emotions suitable for expression in that form. These thirty-five short stories are varied, subtle, and quite representative of O'Hara's talent.

The Best Short Stories, 1939. With the *Yearbook of the American Short Story.* Edited by Edward J. O'Brien. Houghton Mifflin. \$2.75.

It is interesting to note that the volume is dedicated to Richard Wright, the young negro writer, and to Jesse Stuart, Kentucky poet and novelist. In a helpful introduction O'Brien calls attention to this period of transition and to a departure from the narrative in the short story. But are we not, he asks, tending to become a little indifferent to the possibilities of interpreting what we perceive? Many new authors are represented; anyone interested in the new psychology of the American scene will find the collection worthy of study and comparison.

The Best British Short Stories, 1939. Edited by Edward J. O'Brien. Houghton Mifflin. \$2.50.

These excellent stories may with profit be compared as to structure and psychology to those of the American book of short stories. Not only are the stories different; a very different scene and way of living is pictured by the British authors.

America in Midpassage. By Charles A. Beard and Mary B. Beard. Macmillan. \$3.50.

Although complete in itself, and covering the social, economic, and political history of the last ten years, this book is the third volume of the *Rise of American Civilization* by these conscientious historians. Americans, the Beards believe, are becoming conscious of the fact that democracy must be cherished; that the struggle has only begun. Popular institutions and accepted traditions are now studied and analyzed. This is a book to own, to study, and to discuss with people of varied interests.

The Dutch Country: Folks and Treasures in the Red Hills of Pennsylvania. By Cornelius Weygant. Appleton-Century. \$4.00.

The author of the charming *Philadelphia Folk* and *New Hampshire Neighbors* was born in Pennsylvania but has lived for twenty years in New Hampshire. He finds that his appreciation of his native state is made greater by this perspective. He says little of famous people; his interest lies in the folklore, the simple forms of the arts and crafts. Lovers of antiques, collectors, and readers interested in people will thoroughly enjoy this colorful book.

Introducing Britain. By Thomas Burke, S. P. B. Mais, Kenneth Johnstone, Charles Duff *et al.* London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd. 7s. 6d. net.

This book with its photographs and excellent descriptive material should be a good guide for the prospective traveler in the isles and pleasantly informative to the armchair tourist.

I Travel by Train. By Rollo Walter Brown. Appleton. \$3.00.

On his lecture tours, Mr. Brown mixes with many varieties of persons and seeks to understand the meaning of life. In this broad panorama he pictures the "people who produce food—those who go hungry, what they endure and what they dream."

Decoratively Speaking. By Gladys Miller. Doubleday. \$4.00.

This sprightly survey of style in interiors employs a historical approach to show how every decorating trend is a function of its age, and considers competently the question of what backgrounds best suit contemporary life. Especially fine is the summary of "decorating fundamentals"—general principles at work in any room. While as informative as a textbook, the volume reads like a novel. Almost any woman would appreciate it as a gift.

The Devil To Pay. By Dorothy L. Sayers. Harcourt. \$1.50.

A reinterpretation of the legend of Faustus in poetic drama.

The Chinese Are Like That. By Carl Crow. Harper. \$3.00.

Carl Crow wrote the popular *400 Million Customers* from a businessman's point of view. During years of residence in China this observant, sympathetic man has accumulated an inexhaustible fund of information about a people he has learned to respect and admire. He has a real purpose in writing this shrewd interpretation of an amazing race: he wishes us to see his friends as he knows them.

Corn. By Paul Engle. Doubleday. \$2.00.

In the twenty-three-page title poem the thought centers about the Iowa cornfield: first as remembered at Oxford and finally as that to which the poet belongs and returns. Through it and most of the shorter pieces runs the burning conviction that individual living now must not be sacrificed to herd action or in favor of any vague and uncertain hereafter. The approximation to the Anglo-Saxon alliterative line seems a successful experiment.

The Enjoyment of Poetry. By Max Eastman. Scribners. \$2.50.

The original fifteen-chapter essay on *The Enjoyment of Poetry* is reprinted unchanged with more than an equal amount of additional material continuing the psychological explanation of the poetic impulse and process and of the reaction of the reader. Eastman insists that the purpose of poetry is to intensify experience and contrasts it with practical language, which aims at control.

FOR THE INSTRUCTOR

Aesthetic Motive. By Elisabeth Schneider. Macmillan. \$1.75.

In the belief that a satisfactory philosophy of art cannot be evolved until we know with more certainty why man creates and enjoys art, Miss Schneider here takes up the familiar questions of aesthetics and criticism as they are affected by the aesthetic motive. The far-reaching changes in contemporary thinking with respect to biology, economics, the physical world, and the human mind are shown in their relation to an acceptable theory of aesthetics.

Reading and the Educative Process. By Paul Witty and David Kopel. Ginn.

Those who have read the numerous articles by Witty and Kopel in the professional magazines have sensed in their work a challenging new emphasis which called for more complete and systematic exposition. In this volume we have a comprehensive treatment of this fresh approach to reading instruction, with its emphasis upon reading as an aspect of the child's total behavior and the fundamental importance of life-interests in the reading process. The writers constantly appeal to a large body of experimental evidence in support of their position and provide concrete and detailed guidance for the teacher of reading. A large chapter deals specifically with remedial reading in the secondary school. This is a volume of first importance to all teachers concerned with the problem of reading.

Joseph Ritson: Scholar-at-Arms. By Bertrand H. Bronson. 2 vols. University of California Press. \$7.50.

A full-length portrait of an eighteenth-century critic noted for his high standards of scholarship and honesty of reporting in the field of literary criticism. The present

biographer treats his subject not only chronologically but also in terms of the major literary views which distinguished this critic as a "scholar at arms."

The Amazing Career of Sir Giles Overreach. By Robert Hamilton Ball. Princeton University Press. \$5.00.

Dr. Ball here presents a history of the English and American stage by tracing the vicissitudes of Philip Massinger's play, "A New Way To Pay Old Debts," the chief character of which supplies the title for the volume. Since Massinger's play has been presented more frequently than any other English play of its kind with the exception of certain Shakespearean plays, it serves as excellent laboratory material. The volume is well documented and is supplied with attractive full-page illustrations.

Studies in Iconology: Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance. By Erwin Panofsky. Oxford University Press. \$3.50.

These lectures on iconography ("that branch of the history of art which concerns itself with the subject matter or meaning of works of art as opposed to their form") were originally given as the fourth series of Mary Flexner Lectures at Bryn Mawr College and are here presented with eighty-two full-page plates representing famous works of art of many lands and periods.

Modern Poetry and the Tradition. By Cleanth Brooks. University of North Carolina Press. \$3.00.

The tradition seems to be chiefly that of the metaphysical poets, of whom Donne is the chief; and their characteristic which Brooks emphasizes is the refusal to simplify the situations they write about. Rather, they insist upon maintaining the full complexity of their subjects, including even contradictory elements; and yet they achieve a higher unity through reconciliation. Frost, Auden, Eliot, and especially Allen Tate and Robert Penn Warren are praised; Sandburg, Engle, Day Lewis, and Spender fare rather ill.

FOR THE COLLEGE STUDENT

An Approach to Literature. By Cleanth Brooks, Jr., John Thibaut Purser, and Robert Penn Warren. Rev. ed. Crofts. \$3.00.

The prevailing trend in college anthologies is toward greater comprehensiveness and the inclusion of complete units. The present volume excels in both respects: *The Scarlet Letter* is published in full as an illustration of fiction, and four full-length plays—Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler*, Capek's *R.U.R.*, Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*, and Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*—represent the drama. The numerous selections of short stories, essays, and poems have evidently been chosen for their value in building a love of reading rather than for making analyses of literary forms and style.

An Index to English. By Porter G. Perrin. Scott, Foresman. \$1.50.

A handbook of current usage in style providing detailed discussions of selected topics rather than a comprehensive listing of language usages. The classification, which includes both actual words and phrases, as well as general topics, such as fragmentary

sentences, homonyms, and informal English, is alphabetical. The illustrations are from recent writers.

Columbia Workshop Plays: Fourteen Radio Dramas. Selected and edited by Douglas Coulter. McGraw-Hill. \$2.75.

These fourteen plays are original radio scripts designed to exploit the possibilities in the use of technical devices and sound effects and to adapt the drama to the limitations of radio production. The present collection, which makes good reading apart from its interest to the students of dramatic technique, includes MacLeish's "The Fall of the City," Vic Knight's "The Cartwheel," Gibson and Gilsdorff's "The Ghost of Benjamin Sweet," and Norman Corwin's "They Fly through the Air."

Telling Types in Literature. By John B. Opdycke. Macmillan. \$1.80.

Primarily for the talented college student who aspires to the writing of literature, this book undertakes to reveal the peculiar functions and possibilities of the various types of prose and poetry. Each chapter includes an explanation of the type, examples from literature (usually full length), and suggested exercises for the students.

Five Kinds of Writing. Edited by Theodore Morrison. Little, Brown. \$2.50.

Selections from English and American literature, some old, some new, which a large staff of instructors in Freshman composition have found valuable in stimulating discussion or in providing models for effective writing. There is a section of expository writing (including some recent dispatches sent by Hemingway from Spain and Frances Woodward's account of the New England hurricane), a section of literary criticism, a section of verse, a section of biography, and a section of fiction.

A College Book of American Literature. Edited by Milton Ellis, Louise Pound, and George Weida Spohn. American. \$2.50.

Nearly a thousand pages of fairly close print presenting materials for survey courses in American literature from the early Colonial period through the early nineteenth century. The selections and the editorial notes present the literature as a reflection of the life of the time and relate the prose or the poetry to the backgrounds out of which they grew.

Government Ownership of Railroads: Annual Debater's Help Book, Vol. VI. Edited by E. C. Buehler. Noble & Noble. \$2.00.

Debate briefs containing the principal arguments for and against the government ownership of the railroads and special articles from current publications dealing with the current questions selected by the National University Extension Association for debate.

Intercollegiate Debates, Vol. XX. Edited by Egbert Ray Nichols. ("Year Book of College Debating Series.") Noble & Noble. \$2.50.

The full text of nine college debates on such topics as "Government Ownership and Operation of the Railroads," "Isolation and Neutrality on the Part of the United States," "The Armament Program," "Government Spending," and "The Open Door Policy in China."

How To Land a Job and Get Ahead. By E. E. Lewis. Harrison.

A casebook describing the problems of securing a position, exploring one's personal assets, learning how to interview, writing letters of application, avoiding job-selling rackets, and holding a position. W. J. Cameron, radio speaker for the Ford Motor Company, writes the introductory essay.

Essays of Three Decades. Edited by Arno L. Bader and Carlton F. Wells. Harper. \$1.45.

An essay collection for the course in Freshman composition including some of the most stimulating writing of the last three decades by stylists and thinkers like William James, Josiah Royce, John Dewey, Charles Beard, Harold J. Laski, and Wilbur Cross. The topics are amazingly timely: "The Problem of War," "The American Scene," "Propaganda and Public Opinion," "Education," "Thinking," "Science," "Government," and "Literary Values." A helpful booklet containing teaching suggestions for the collection accompanies the volume.

A Handbook of Essentials in English. By Laird Bell. Holt. \$3.00.

Rules governing English grammar, sentence structure, and diction, with illustrations and sets of exercises. The volume is rather heavily weighted with technical terminology and with a reference system which hinders rather than helps the mastery of the principles.

Reading and Thinking. By Frank H. McCloskey and Robert B. Dow. Doubleday, Doran. \$1.20.

This anthology of prose selections is intended to aid in building up both skill and interest in reading on the part of the college student. Most of the selections are by such contemporary American writers as Heywood Broun, Westbrook Pegler, Ernest Hemingway, and H. L. Mencken, and such English essayists as J. B. S. Haldane, Robert Louis Stevenson, and Thomas Henry Huxley, but other writers who are contemporary only in subject matter or in spirit have been included. The exercises are designed to promote close attention to precision of meaning and the changing uses of words.

Short Stories. Edited by William Thomson Hastings and Benjamin Crocker Clough. Rev. ed. Houghton Mifflin. \$1.00.

English, American, and Continental short stories selected from the work of famous writers and presented in a format that avoids the appearance of a textbook. There are thirty-seven selections in this inexpensive but readable volume.

Write That Play. By Kenneth Thorpe Rowe. Funk & Wagnalls. \$3.00.

Professor Rowe traces the process of playwriting from the early stages of gathering material to the final steps of securing publication or production. Both the one-act play and the long play are studied from the point of view of dramatic technique and theory. A line by line analysis of Ibsen's *Doll House* is presented by way of illustration.

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